

January 24, 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.

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

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

**Councilmember Walker arrived.*

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; Jessie Nunery, Media Relations Specialist; 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; Corey Mercer, Fire Chief; Abdul Baloch, Chief Internal Auditor; Chris Beschler, Director of Energy Resources; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Brad Kerr, Public Works Director; Keyana Walston, Program Manager-Management Analyst; Brenton Bent, Water Resources Director; Gregory Cotten, Chief Technology Officer; Tracey Drewery, Assistant Fire Chief; Will Deaton, Development Services; Michael Roupp, Assistant Chief of Operations; Chynice Chapman, Purchasing Manager; Cornelia McGee, Community Development Administrator; 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 4:00 p.m. and requested a moment for individual silent prayer.

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

Mayor Roberson stated it has been requested that items 3A, 3B and 3C will be added to today's agenda as follows:

- 3A - ratification of appointment of Peter F. Varney as Interim City Manager (effective January 23, 2022);
- 3B - Administration of oath to Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney by the Honorable Lamont Wiggins, Resident Superior Court Judge, Judicial District 7B;
- 3C - Consideration of Resolution and authorization for depository accounts and treasury management services to update banking authorizations at PNC Bank (changes authority from Rochelle D. Small-Toney to Peter F. Varney); and
- 15A - Consideration of separation and independent contractor agreement with former City Manager, Rochelle D. Small-Toney

Mr. Varney recommended that item number 10 relative to consideration of a contract with The Robert Bobb Group be removed from the agenda. He noted the prior contract with The Robert Bobb Group

expired in December 2021 and removing this item from the agenda would have the effect of ending the City's relationship with the group.

Councilmember Knight requested that Item 9 relative to a Resolution approving amendments to the City's position classification and pay plan be tabled.

**Councilmember Miller arrived*

Mr. Varney stated he has received a request from United Community Ministries requesting an allocation of funds for the congregant McDonald Street Shelter in the amount of \$13,750 to be used for the quarantine of residents testing positive for the COVID-19 virus. He explained that CDBG-CARES Act funding previously allocated for utility assistance is available and that an agreement will be entered into with United Community Ministries.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight, and unanimously carried that the agenda be amended, as requested.

APPOINTMENT OF PETER F. VARNEY, INTERIM CITY MANAGER - RATIFICATION

The City Council considered the ratification of the appointment of Peter F. Varney as Interim City Manager effective January 23, 2022, which was previously informally approved by the City Council.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the action taken to appoint Peter F. Varney as Interim City Manager effective January 23, 2022, be ratified.

OATH OF OFFICE/INTERIM CITY MANAGER, PETER F. VARNEY

Mayor Roberson recognized the Honorable Lamont Wiggins, Resident Superior Court Judge for Judicial District 7B, to administer the oath of office to Interim City Manager, Peter F. Varney.

Judge Wiggins administered the oath of office to Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney, congratulated Mr. Varney on his appointment and Mr. Varney received a standing ovation on his appointment.

DEPOSITORY

The City Council was requested to authorize a change of the City's primary authorized banking representative from the former City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney to Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney effective January 23, 2022. Council was advised that the authorized banking representative is the primary City contact granted authority on the PNC bank accounts and may delegate access and authority to others. The authorized representative may also make additions, deletions and other changes as needed based on municipal operational needs and changes in personnel responsible for banking transactions.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried that **Resolution No. R-2022-6** entitled **MASTER RESOLUTION AND AUTHORIZATION FOR DEPOSITORY ACCOUNTS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICES** be adopted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Councilmember Walker, seconded by Councilmember Miller, and unanimously carried that the minutes of a regular scheduled Committee of the Whole Meeting and minutes a regular scheduled City Council Meeting held December 13, 2021, 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 A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2021, IN THE GEORGE W. DUDLEY CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING WITH MAYOR PRO TEM RICHARD JOYNER PRESIDING:

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

COUNCILMEMBER ABSENT:

T.J. Walker

SECURITY OFFICERS:

Police Sergeant Stephen Walker

OTHERS PRESENT:

Dorothy Brown Smith, Consultant

STAFF PRESENT:

Rochelle D. Small-Toney
 Pamela O. Casey
 Jessie Nunery
 Mark Adcox
 Robin Cox
 Elton Daniels
 Brenton Bent
 Archie Jones
 Robert Hassell
 Greg Cotten
 Chris Beschler
 Ken Hunter
 Latasha Hall
 Corey Mercer
 Will Deaton
 Mike Roupp
 Tracey Drewery
 Darvin Moore
 Brad Kerr
 Abdul Baloch
 Kena Cofield-Jones
 Keyana Walston
 Jayson Dawkins
 Melissa Alston
 Kim Batts
 A.B. Bangura
 Richard J. Rose

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem Richard Joyner called the meeting to order at 4:59 p.m. and thanked the City Council for electing him Mayor Pro Tem and allowing him to serve the Council and the City as such in 2021. He called on City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney to introduce the agenda items.

Ms. Small-Toney stated it has been a pleasure working with Mayor Pro Tem Joyner and said they have had interesting conversations and good healthy debates while moving Council initiatives forward.

The City Manager noted that today's agenda is lengthy and introduced Ms. Dorothy Brown Smith to present the first agenda item.

TEAM BUILDING AND COLLABORATION - Dorothy Brown Smith, Consultant

Ms. Smith told the City Council that key next steps were identified in the City Council retreat held April 7-9, 2021, with one of those steps being scheduling a team development and collaboration workshop:

- to improve City Council trust in an effort to enhance team dynamics;
- increase effective communication flow; and
- help ensure the affordable housing process is implemented most strategically, collaboratively, and inclusively within the City and in concert with the relevant stakeholders for project implementation.

Ms. Smith presented a PowerPoint presentation relative to the team building and collaboration outlining the objectives, process and solutions identified by Councilmembers and provided the Council with a Team Building and Collaboration Agreement for consideration.

Next steps were identified as:

- Adoption of the Team Building and Collaboration Agreement;
- Updating the City Council Vision Statement;
- Developing a timeframe to execute solutions;
- Retaking the 360 Feedback Questionnaire (previously taken in September 2021) to determine if traction has been made;
- Conducting orientation for newly elected officials (include out-going Councilmembers);
- Meeting on a quarterly basis to assess and discuss "hot" topics; and
- Developing a problem-solving process.

The Mayor Pro Tem thanked Ms. Smith for her efforts and Mayor Roberson echoed that sentiment.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action

ATLAS ONE LIVE DEMO - Robert Hassell

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney introduced the next item on today's agenda and told the Council that the Atlas (public safety smart city app) is a project that is near and dear to her heart. Council was advised that the application utilizes the Atlas One platform to provide residents with mobile one-stop access to information provided by the City's Police and Fire Departments. Ms. Small-Toney noted that many City departments (Police, Fire, Technology Services) worked together to make this app available.

It was explained that the app is available for download for Apple and Android devices through either the Apple App Store or Google Play. The City Manager stated that she thinks the app responds to some of the questions and concerns of Council about reporting of criminal activity and public safety activities and added it is her understanding Rocky Mount is one of only two cities in the state with this capability.

Police Chief Robert Hassell provided a PowerPoint presentation and with the assistance of Technology Services, IT Project Manager, Melissa Alston, gave a demonstration of the app.

The City Council was advised that:

- The Atlas One app will provide City residents with one-stop-shop access to transparent public safety information and City services to include:
 - Spotighting City leadership and innovation;
 - Increased public support and trust; and
 - Resource and cost savings.
- The City Council received information about:
 - The resident mobile app;
 - The admin web portal;

- o Notifications;
- o Incident alerts;
- o Two-way tipping and conversations; and
- o The resource Hub.

Chief Hassell advised that the app is currently in Beta (testing) Status and publicly available and testing and staff training is anticipated to continue for the next two weeks. The Police Chief responded to questions from Councilmembers.

Councilmember Knight requested that Council receive earlier notification when there is an occurrence in their particular ward. Councilmember Blackwell voiced support for the app and said one of the problems Council wrestles with is receiving incomplete and inaccurate information. He added there are a number of senior and elderly people in the City and manipulating the app may not be as easy for them.

Mayor Roberson thanked the Police Chief and staff for the open mindedness in working to find an innovative solution.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action

CUSTOMER PORTAL - Will Deaton

City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney told the Council the next item on the agenda is a demonstration of the permits and inspections customer service portal. She called on Will Deaton, Development Services Director, to provide the demonstration.

Mr. Deaton told the Council that the Development Services Department, along with other City departments, has been working to include the Munis Permits and Code Enforcement Field Inspector app as a mobile application to simplify the one-site inspection process and documentation, provide online fillable application forms and utilize a central email contact for all inquiries and scheduling requests. The City Council was informed to further expand existing technology efforts the Development Services Department has worked to create the permit and inspections portal to allow residents and contractors to:

- View the status of permit application and inspection results online;
- Schedule permitting and inspections online; and
- Upload documents and pay fees.

Mr. Deaton provided a demonstration and explained that the live portal will update information as it is entered, and customers will receive updates and be able to search and view projects, status, and results. He added that staff has created guides for permitting and inspections to assist customers with this new initiative.

Mr. Deaton responded to questions from Councilmembers.

The City Manager told the Council this is a continuation of the City's one-stop-shop efforts and staff will continue to assess the process and make improvements.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action

PURCHASED GAS ADJUSTMENT DISCUSSION - Ken Hunter

Ms. Small-Toney called on Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation, to make a PowerPoint presentation relative to the Purchased Gas Adjustment (PGA).

The City Council was advised that pursuant to the City's rate policies established in 2005 (Administrative Policy No. X.7.27) the City may implement a Purchased Gas Adjustment (PGA) on a monthly basis to the

sale of natural gas as a per therm charge to address "the difference between the estimated and actual cost of natural gas." The policy provides that the adjustment may be made each month by the Director of Energy Resources. It was explained that in recent months the City has experienced a significant increase in its purchase of natural gas for retail sale to utility customers. It was noted that while the City has already purchased 75% of its natural gas supply for upcoming winter months, the noticeable increase in spot prices has already impacted the City's first quarter of the fiscal year and the impact could continue to significantly impact the City if below-projected temperatures are experienced. The Council was informed that the City's revised forecast for the remainder of FY 2022 projects gas purchase costs to increase by \$3M resulting in a \$3M margin shortfall without PGA.

The Council was provided with a history of PGA utilization, the current status and implementation options.

Mr. Hunter told the City Council that staff recommends proceeding with a \$.20 per therm PGA for January 2022 to June 2022 and appropriating the entire \$1.1M of the rate stabilization fund and \$400,000 in additional fund balance. He explained the impact for residential customers will be an increase of \$20 per 100 terms used. It was further explained that this approach will achieve nearly full recovery of the shortfall created by the wholesale price increase while leaving another \$550,000 in rate stabilization available in the event the City experiences further cost increases due to colder winter weather or other factors.

Mr. Hunter responded to questions from Councilmembers.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated that in looking at the chart he sees a trend and questioned if the severity of the increase would have been lessened by taking action earlier since the policy indicates an adjustment should be made monthly. He voiced opposition to a fund transfer adding he feels it would be prudent to cut something from the General Fund.

Councilmember Knight requested that the Council receive a presentation from the Energy Resources Director as to how the City can prepare itself and let customers know what is expected. The City Manager stated that Energy Resources Director Chris Beschler was involved in preparing today's presentation. She explained that it is the same money whether it is called rate stabilization or fund balance and staff is looking for how to address the projected \$3M shortfall.

Councilmember Blackwell stated the utility bill crisis is what initiated the need to look at improving the City's housing stock because it was clear that a huge percentage of the City's houses were 50 years or older without appropriate insulation. He said this prompted the Council to invest more aggressively in helping people to shore up their homes and now the Council is looking at a full initiative to bring more affordable housing that is decent, safe, and accessible.

The City Manager requested a consensus from Council to move forward as recommended by staff. Mayor Pro Tem Joyner asked when the Council can expect an update and Mr. Hunter advised a report can be provided in February or March. The Mayor Pro Tem requested that a report be received from the Energy Resources Director at that time as well.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. By consensus, the City Council approved implementation options, as recommended (\$.20/therm PGA effective January 1st; utilize rate stabilization fund with contribution of additional \$500,000 from fund balance).

CRIME STATISTICS - Robert Hassell

Police Chief Robert Hassell presented a summary of city-wide crime numbers to the City Council for November 2021. 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 Chief Hassell's PowerPoint presentation 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	November 2020	November 2021	+/-	YTD 2020	YTD 2021	+/-
Total	213	151	-62	1999	1652	-347

- December 2021 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 = 21
 - Aggravated assault victims = 31
 - Number cases with multiple victims = 5
 - Aggravated assault arrests = 5
 - Aggravated assault cases cleared = 8
 - Case Dispositions (total = 21):
 - Cases cleared by arrest = 5
 - Exceptionally cleared = 1
 - Incident cleared = 2
 - Inactive cases = 5
 - Open cases = 8

Chief Hassell noted that violent crime is down by 21 percent.

- Crime Report:
 - Murder, aggravated assault and shooting into occupied building/vehicle: total victims = 32
 - *Victims with injuries = 15
 - *Victims without injuries = 17
- ShotSpotter and Citizen calls City-wide:
 - Shots fired = 73
 - Calls resulting in shell casings found = 27
 - Number shell casings found = 205
 - Number of Firearms Seized = 33
 - Number firearms seized (year to date) = 388
 - Weapon violation arrests = 6
- Community Involvement:
 - **Police Athletic/Activity League** - 13-15-year-old male and female basketball league is well underway with 46 participants;
 - **Veterans Day** - Police Explorers honored Veterans by serving meals at Applebee's Restaurant;
 - **Veteran's Memorial Service** - Police Officers attended Veteran's Memorial Service at Jack Laughery Park; and
 - **Pack-a-Patrol-Car** - A partnership between Piggly Wiggly and the Police Department and citizens donated food to the Down East Partnership for Children.

Chief Hassell responded to questions from Councilmembers. Councilmember Knight stated that the Police need to be heard and seen and the City needs to tell its own story and not allow a blog to create drama. Mayor Roberson applauded the efforts of the Police Department and

agreed the City needs to promote a message on a consistent and constant basis. Mayor Pro Tem Joyner thanked the Chief and the Police Department for working with other law enforcement in both Nash and Edgecombe Counties.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

FIRST QUARTER FY 2022 FINANCIAL REPORT/REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES: A.B. Bangura, Finance Consultant (The Robert Bobb Group)

The City Manager introduced A.B. Bangura, Finance Consultant with The Robert Bobb Group, to present the Fiscal Year 2022 First Quarter Financial Report.

Mr. Bangura told the Council his presentation will be from the "big picture" perspective. He provided a PowerPoint report of revenues and expenditures for government funds and reported:

- General Fund revenues continue to exceed forecasts in multiple sources;
- Ad Valorem Tax receipts reflect strong housing market and collections;
- Local Option Sales Tax continues to grow; and
- Expenditures are being carefully managed as staff works to ensure the City finishes the current fiscal year with a balanced budget and minimal use of appropriated fund balance;
- Electric revenues declined compared to last year;
- Gas Fund revenues increased compared to last year;
- Wholesale natural gas costs led to an increase in Gas Fund expenditures while both Electric and Gas also increased capital outlay in relation to several current projects;
- Water revenues increased for the quarter;
- Sewer sales decreased due to the lower demand;
- Stormwater revenues performed as expected with increased capital expenditure activity expected in the upcoming months of the fiscal year.

Mr. Bangura concluded his presentation by reporting that:

- Revenue monitoring continues and it is anticipated FY 2022 will finish in line with budgeted forecasts (ad valorem taxes are key, especially in the 2nd quarter);
- Staff continues to monitor and control expenditures (evaluated impact of 4.5% COLA now in effect);
- Staff is working on the proposed CIP for FY 2023-2027; and
- FY 2023 Budget Development will begin in late January 2022.

Mr. Bangura applauded the City for its conservative approach and commended the Mayor and City Council stating they run "a tight ship."

Councilmember Knight questioned the timeline for hiring a Finance Director. City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney stated it is an ongoing process adding that the City will continue with the executive search process and will provide updates to Council.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Information only; no formal action.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the Mayor Pro Tem adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

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

RECOGNITION OF FORMER CITY MANAGER ROCHELLE D. SMALL-TONEY

Mayor Roberson recognized Councilmember Walker. Mr. Walker stated that he did not know whether the Mayor had planned to recognize former City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney, but in the event he had not planned to do so wished to make comment. Mayor Roberson invited him to speak.

Councilmember Walker thanked former City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney for her work in Rocky Mount and the achievements made during her tenure. He said the City celebrates the fact that she was Rocky Mount's first African American female City Manager and the history created. Councilmember Walker asked that the former City Manager be given a standing ovation.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY INTERIM CITY MANAGER

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

- Acknowledged the City's Energy Resources, Fire, Police and Public Works Departments for an outstanding job responding to Friday's snowfall. Mr. Varney reported that the City received about 4 inches of snow between Friday afternoon and early Saturday and that Public Works employees worked through the night Friday clearing major roads in the City. He said that thanks to sunny weather on Saturday, primary and secondary roads were generally clear by Saturday afternoon; Energy Resources reported no electrical or gas outages as a result of the weather; and the Fire Department and Police Department had extra personnel on duty but reported no major incidents.
- Reminded the public that the Environmental Services division is experiencing delays in solid waste, recycling, and yard waste collection. He added, as may have been seen in videos posted on the City's Facebook and YouTube pages, these delays have been caused by staff shortages due to COVID-19 as well as mechanical issues with vehicles. He requested that if garbage is not collected on the scheduled day, that carts be left out by the curb to be serviced as soon as possible. Mr. Varney reported that delays are currently running 1-2 days behind schedule and patience during this time is appreciated. He added that the City is making every effort to provide the quality and timely services citizens deserve.
- Citizens were encouraged to stay connected to the latest information through the City's social media pages available via Facebook, Instagram, and NeXT door. It was noted that the CITY-TV 19 YouTube page is the home for live City Council meetings, weekly videos, press conferences, and more and citizens may also sign up for text messaging by texting CITYBEAT to 55469. Mr. Varney advised that a bi-monthly newsletter, also named CITYBEAT, is available for free, but the public must sign up via rockymountnc.gov, which houses scheduled meetings and events as well as departmental forms and information.

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:***
 - Acknowledged that the City Council and City as a whole is going through a transition period but added in a few months, there's going to be at least two Councilmembers who will be dropping off with two new Councilmembers joining and potential for a third Councilmember to leave;
 - Requested Council consider delaying the vetting process [relative to grants] until the new Council is in place, likely in June or July though it is uncertain at this time;

- Said he has previously supported worthy organizations receiving grants and special loans but in light of some recent developments requested that the City revamp its process for reviewing requests for grants and loans and instead of having a 3-person subcommittee review the applications that the full Council consider the grant applications;
 - Said the citizens of Rocky Mount deserve openness, transparency, and accountability, which leads to credibility and there are some kinks that need to be worked out in the current process; and
 - Stated such action appears to be being made behind closed doors and openness, transparency, accountability, and credibility is needed
- ***Samuel Battle:***
- Said he is here today because of a phone call he received about a fire last night at 1000 Long Avenue which is owned by Farouk Hammad;
 - Said fire was coming out of the electrical socket in a house where a mother and her kids lived, and the Fire Department said there should have been two panel boxes not one;
 - Asked how houses like this can pass inspection adding that some years ago approximately 8 people died in a house;
 - Said it seems this only happens in communities of color;
 - Questioned how many people attended the Council retreat at the Grove Park Inn and who stayed in the hotel rooms; and
 - Said in the last meeting JAY-Z was referred to as a prophet; said he is not and was never a profit adding the comment was disrespectful to put one Black man against another [JAY-Z and OJ] adding he loves them both, but they should not be put together

Mr. Varney confirmed the address and stated staff will look into the matter of the fire. He stated he believes the information relative to the City Council retreat has been released and published.

Councilmember Blackwell said he can say whatever he wishes to say. He said he did not write the song that he referred to at the last meeting. Mr. Blackwell added that the song was written by JAY-Z and was about how people perceive Black people of all status levels and create division among themselves. He said some think they are exempt from be considered Black and that is what the song is about. He said if someone has a beef about the song they should call JAY-Z.

- ***Ashton Haughton:***
- Said he is Vice President of the Berkshire Community and is also a member of the Workforce Advisory Committee which deals with housing;
 - Thanked the City Council, City Manager and members of staff that assisted the Berkshire Community in fulfilling its goals to rehabilitate and restore the Berkshire community adding they wanted to restore ownership and get rid of slumlords that come into neighborhoods, and buy off homes and destroy the community;
 - Said the Berkshire Community is in the process of rebuilding and restoring wealth to the community and with the help of the City has been able to buy 1816 Duncan Drive, rehabilitate it and put out in the community for sale;
 - Said a family is living there now and the Community is in the process of putting up a home on 701 Lincoln Drive now;
 - Thanked the City for its help adding they will be able to accomplish more and be able to help rebuild a community; and
 - Urged the City not to take away funding from the Berkshire Community so they can continue to assist the City in restoring affordable housing in the community

- ***Monica Bland:***
 - Said she is a small business owner of Bland Premier Properties;
 - Said her late father, Charles Puddy, believed in the Rocky Mount community and her parents instilled in their children that they should give back and help people along the way and fight for what they believe;
 - Said she is here today to fight for her name;
 - Said when she and her husband decided to relocate after retiring from the military they decided to come back to her hometown, invest in the City and be a part of the community that she has always loved and where she was born and raised;
 - Said their plans are to provide affordable housing that is safe and clean for their tenants, and it is her understanding if they meet the requirements for the housing grant, and are awarded the grant, they will need to complete the scope of work outlined in the proposal; and
 - She said she looks forward to partnering with the City to improve housing conditions

- ***Jacquay Bland:***
 - Said he is part owner of Bland Premier Properties and his wife, Monica, just spoke;
 - Said their company is a small business real estate company;
 - Thanked the City for considering their small business for the Council Initiative Housing Grant;
 - Said he is here to report that since the Council's approval of the grant his business and family has been harassed by individuals and the publication of fake and erroneous news in the Spring Hope Enterprise newspaper and online via social media sites;
 - Said he would like to let the citizens of Rocky Mount know who he is;
 - Said he is a combat veteran and a minority-owned small business person who decided to move back to Rocky Mount after he retired from the military;
 - Said he could have moved anywhere in the United States but chose to honor his wife's wishes to return back to Rocky Mount in order to do their part and make a difference providing affordable housing to the citizens of Rocky Mount;
 - Said he is happy to say they made the right decision because people in the community are friendly and family-oriented; however, recently he has been exposed to some bad actors who would like to tear his business and family reputation down;
 - Said they will not be silenced or intimidated by individuals who have nothing better to do but do research and create confusion spreading lies about their neighbors;
 - Said what the City is doing in regards to the housing grant is sorely needed and can assist members of the public with improving properties for members who live here in the City and care about the housing condition of properties;
 - Said rather than continuing to see outside investors swoop in and buy up everything which improves the housing but also raises rents and forces hardworking people out, they plan to utilize the grant to improve the condition of the property and improve the quality of life of their tenants;
 - Said he wants to set the record straight because it was stated in the article that his business has received \$40,000 in grant money and that is false;
 - Said they applied for the grant like everybody else, but has not been guaranteed or promised anything;
 - Said it was published that his business sold or deeded property to family with criminal records and last time he checked it was not a crime to transfer assets to family;
 - Said too often in the Black community people are stereotyped and criticized;
 - Said they did the right thing and are being targeted and made out to have participated in some type of unlawful activity;
 - Said he and his family are hardworking people and have worked for everything they have;

- Said those who have a problem with him need to address him directly and leave his family alone;
 - Said all have made mistakes and he too has done things he is not proud of;
 - Said people should not throw stones when they live in a glass house; and
 - Said people should not be looked down on because they have made a mistake and all should work to help others, treat others with respect and love their brothers and neighbors
- ***Mack Battle:***
- Congratulated the Council on being a blessing to the East End Missionary Baptist Church in providing this grant;
 - Said that area is called “The Neighborhood” adding that 18 years ago when he started pastoring there the area needed a lot of revitalization;
 - He expressed appreciation for the Holly Street effort and said more needs to be done;
 - Said he brought a few constituents with him tonight and asked them to stand (about 8 individuals stood);
 - Said they wanted to salute Council for the job they are doing;
 - Encouraged the City Council to continue doing what is right in the City; and
 - Encouraged all to work and lead together and consider each other saying “together we stand - divided we fall”
- ***Adrienne Copland:***
- Said in the spirit of transparency she obtained a copy of the application for housing incentive grant;
 - Said her issue is not that Council spends money and is not that they spend money in certain areas or for certain causes adding she is glad they are spending money to help impoverished areas;
 - Said she is spending her own money, hundreds of thousands of dollars, in impoverished areas to fix up houses;
 - Said her issue is not with groups or people asking for money;
 - Said her issue is that for the amount of money spent Council could be helping far more people; another issue is that they consistently give large amounts of money to single entities or persons for very small projects and some of these recipients are getting money year after year;
 - Said her issue is that Council turns down large numbers of people who need the help and select just a few winners;
 - Said all want maximum impact from money spent;
 - Said the focus should be on getting the most bang for the buck; and
 - Said she expects money to be spent in a fair, legal, ethical, and equitable way, every single time
- ***Tamara Puddy:***
- Said the reason she is here today is in support of her sister and brother-in-law;
 - Said there have been things written about them in a publication that she feels is unfair and she wants to show her support;
 - Said her father's name was Charles Puddy and he spent a lot of time in Rocky Mount and had a lot of love for the people of Rocky Mount;
 - Said when her father was buried a woman came up to her and said she had marched with her father as a child to desegregate Rocky Mount and make it fair for all people. She said that lady told her something she will never forget and that was “they're going to tell you that you're nothing - don't believe them”;
 - Said that goes for anyone in this room that is trying to change their life, and maybe make up for things that they've done in their past;
 - Said the article written had a subtitle that read “the Puddy family” and she wants to tell anyone who saw the article about the Puddy family;

- Said when the family gathers in a room they consist of current and retired military personnel, workforce management professionals, health care professionals, mental health professionals, social media professionals, manufacturing professionals, etc.;
 - Said it is important for her to get the point across that she does not know anyone more ethical than her sister and brother-in-law and it is very hurtful when people insinuate that they are criminals by association; and
 - Repeated the statement made to her by saying “they're going to tell you that you are nothing - don't believe them
- ***Nehemiah Smith:***
- Said the Puddys are salt of the earth people and some of the best people he knows;
 - Said he is confused like Sophia in *The Color Purple* adding he is seldom confused;
 - Said it was okay:
 - When a City Manager had a garbage collector arrested for taking a suit of clothes from a trash heap;
 - When the City Manager and City Council entered into an agreement for electricity that nearly killed the regular citizens with exorbitant utility bills and funny that no one was asking for performance numbers or who the bondholders were; and
 - When City Manager Raper and his Assistant City Manager allowed Gary Weeks to steal City time, supplies and equipment to make pig cookers and deer stands on City property when a City employee was able to have timber cleared from City property adding that nobody to this day knows where that money went;
 - Said the minute a City Manager dared to build an Event Center a “we don't need that campaign” was formed;
 - Said it was said we don't need that when a City Manager proposed to build a hotel and parking deck to enhance the existing Event Center or committed to and removed a Confederate statue;
 - Said it was said that Manager was incompetent and was attacking heritage; and
 - Said he is confused and still trying to understand the difference between Batchelor, Raper, Penny and Small-Toney and while the two aforementioned were loved and left with fanfare and the two latter were reviled, and made villains
- ***Bronson Williams:***
- Said the world is full of great opportunities and there are a lot of risks right here in the City. He added the challenge faced often with opportunities is that now isn't the time or there is a let's wait and see attitude;
 - Said he is amazed at how quickly people can spin 180 degrees in their opinions;
 - Said he has learned in life that you can't cry over spilled milk; however, we must remember the actions that led up to that effort and never repeat them again and learn from those misbehaviors;
 - Said proper planning is critical to the success of the City and we don't need a plan that is put away in some back room, or on a backburner. We need a plan that is clear, is updated and is relevant to today's goals and objectives for all citizens in the community; and
 - Urged the Council to publicly and through transparency update a plan that people can see and buy into to allow developers from across this country to participate and want to be a part of the City because Rocky Mount is “the center of it all”

- ***Kiyah Darden:***
 - Said her concern today is the issue that comes up whenever communities are passed by and deteriorate and the issue that sparks every time something is done to better communities;
 - Said she participated recently when there was a concern when the man from the Princess Mart attacked an elderly man and that effort resulted in the store being shut down; she added there is much to do in that area of the City because it really looks bad;
 - Voiced concern relative to convenience stores coming to communities that are not owned by people in the community and the disrespect shown to those living in the community;
 - Said she lives in the Hillsdale Community and is concerned about illegal activity and deterioration of buildings in her community;
 - Said things are being posted on social media about her godmother that are not true, and she is concerned people will read and believe those allegations; and
 - Said she lives in the Hillsdale Community and has to go all the way to South Rocky Mount to go to the gym

- ***Antoinette Cutler:***
 - Said she is a pastor and is president of the Hillsdale Community and is here because the community stood behind Councilmember Knight and will continue to stick behind him.;
 - Said she is grateful that the Council are allowing them to fix the building that has history (barber shop in the Hillsdale Community) and was a place where people could meet and gather and talk about and discuss things to better the community;
 - Said they are looking forward to being able to build back a community center so they can meet together, young people can exercise, and where those that want to come to community meetings can attend without having to get in their car and feel unsafe when it is dark;
 - Said this will be more convenient for the elderly and the community is grateful they are going to have the opportunity to have a place where young people can come and learn; and grateful for the opportunity to build back the community;
 - Said she is grateful for City Manager Rochelle Small-Toney and everything she did for the City and grateful she had the opportunity to be the first Black lady to become City Manager;
 - Said she lost her daughter, Sierra Cutler, on September the 20th when she died from COVID and complications following a caesarean adding her daughter had been very careful to not get COVID but got it while in the hospital;
 - Said the hospital pushed her daughter out of the hospital once they found out that she had COVID; and
 - Said a hospital wing is needed so when women go into the hospital to have children they are not just pushed out until they are safe and no longer test positive for COVID

- ***Mary Warren:***
 - Said she lives in Ward 3 and has been active in the Southeast Rocky Mount community for 35 years;
 - Said she comes before Council today to congratulate them for approving funding for the Southeast Rocky Mount community;
 - Said she told Mr. Varney years ago by the time the City got around to improving the Southeast Rocky Mount community she might not be here but to God be the glory that she is still here;
 - Said the community has had many issues but after 35 plus years has come together with the faith-based community and Community Action Group and are working on issues in the community;
 - Said the community is thankful for the City and what it is doing for inner-city communities;

- Invited anyone that does not know the story of the Southeast Community to come talk with them because there are some good people doing some fantastic things in the community and there is a movement going on; and
 - Said she wanted to personally thank the City Manager and Councilmembers for what they are doing
- ***Troy Davis:***
 - Thanked the Council for ending his nightmare with Rochelle Small-Toney;
 - Welcomed Mr. Varney back as Interim City Manager saying he recently told him it would not be the last time he saw him.
 - Said he wishes the City and community could come together and work to revitalize the 13 underserved and underprivileged communities;
 - Said there is \$8M in back taxes that need to be collected and doing so would take the City a long way; and
 - Said many owing back taxes are deceased and the county is having a difficult time foreclosing on these properties adding the City needs to work with Edgecombe and Nash Counties to foreclose on more homes
 - ***Crystal Wimes-Anderson:***
 - Said she lives in Ward 3, and it saddens her to come here today;
 - Said there are sayings, “don't let your good be evil spoken of” and “be mindful of who you allow to speak for you”;
 - Said she is speaking from her own involvement and engagement and is tired of being discredited because some think she needs to wait her turn, as though she is some child that needs permission to be an adult;
 - Said she is tired of being good enough to volunteer her time, knowledge, and kids to help accomplish someone's mission but yet, when she speaks about matters dear to her, they get overlooked;
 - Said she is tired of being asked dumb questions and being felt to be less because she chose to move to the Edgecombe County side of town;
 - Said when she speaks, she speaks about her ward and since day one she has been vocal for improvement to assist members of the community by helping them get transported to their jobs, advising them on their health, helping them fix things around their house, cleaning local businesses from trash in their parking lots, etc. and is very engaged in her community;
 - Said she minds her own business most of the time but now it's hitting home and deciding to come on her street; said she cannot be silent when she can't get consistent trash services in her neighborhood, when she can't get the City to cut down a tree that's clearly in the drain line and has been growing roots where the City hasn't cleaned out the sewer system and she has had to call them back three times to blow it out because her house is backing up;
 - Said when she can't get basic services and is spending her own money for plumbing issues that are the City's responsibility, she has to say something; and
 - Said the City has not made a person on Planter Street and Swift Road adhere to code enforcement and he leaves trash there yet is building a house for him

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

Councilmember Joyner asked the Interim City Manager about the status of a homeless person residing on the lot about which Ms. Wimes-Anderson spoke and if the City can assist him in getting him into a stable place.

Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney asked Ms. Wimes-Anderson to provide the addresses of the properties she spoke about to staff member Cornelia McGee.

Councilmember Blackwell responded by saying that Ms. Wimes-Anderson gave her time as a student and shifted from nursing to learn about construction and became a star student. He thanked her for her good work and thanked Councilmember Joyner for his work in the community.

Councilmember Knight said that the Council is sorry the Puddy family has had to endure false and inaccurate comments and defamation. He said Councilmembers know who they are and know they have stuck to their roots and are proud of that. Said he had a hallelujah down in his spirit because Ms. Warren was able to witness the City on the rise and witness the City become the center of it all in her lifetime. He voiced appreciation for what she along with other ladies in the community have done adding that so many have gone on and were not able to see the fruits being produced as the City stands on their shoulders. He said he prays God will give her the strength to endure and strength to help the City carry out this vision adding he wants to say "God bless all" who believe in the Council's mission and initiatives. Said the comment made earlier by a speaker should be reiterated and said ""they're going to tell you that you're nothing - don't believe them."

Councilmember Blackwell thanked Councilmember Knight for always setting the stage correctly and said:

- he wanted to appreciate everyone who participated in the process and the last round of funding;
- the Council has had Council initiatives for a number of years because it was very clear to those who represent inner-city communities that they have had the highest utility bills of any community adding that nobody was storming City Hall complaining about what they were paying;
- when money that those communities invested in the City was turned back to benefit them suddenly something is wrong;
- the community has to stay the course and focus on what needs to be done and not worry about who is not happy;
- as long as what is being done is legal and ethical it should be done. He stated that a lot of allegations have been thrown around about individual Councilmembers and some people have made it their business to know all about him who know nothing about him;
- people can say what they want but he and the other elected officials are here to build the City back;
- sometimes people, Black people in particular, have a problem valuing themselves as much as they value others and said he doesn't think he is better than anybody, but nobody is better than him;
- he hopes all can learn to value history and investment is needed;

- he is concerned about Mary Warren and the Puddy family because some people look down their nose at parties that stayed in place and did not run when everybody else fled to other places;
- there are some millionaires and billionaires in this City, who were felons in prison, convicted, walking around with shackles, and nobody came down here telling the City Council not to work with those people but want to give a lens of impropriety and corruption because Council happens to believe in the people that helped make this City great.

A citizen called for point of order and the Mayor indicated that Councilmember Blackwell had the floor.

Mr. Blackwell concluded his comments by saying he does not tear people down because of what they did but also doesn't expect people to tear him down because he is trying to build. He said he has the floor as an elected Councilperson and can say what he wants to say. He stated momentum is not going to end and though the faces may have changed people's resolve has not. He said you can either have a rising tide or you can have a tsunami - it's up to you to choose whether it's going to be positive or destructive adding he chooses what is positive.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

SCHEDULE B - taxes over \$100 recommended for release and/or refund by the City Council:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>BILL NO.</u>	<u>NAME/ADDRESS</u>	<u>TAX</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
<u>EDGEcombe COUNTY</u>				
2021	6088	THORNE, WILLIE CHARLES 620 BUENA VISTA ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27801	164.57	CITY ELDERLY/DISABLED EXEMPTION
		TOTAL RELEASE:	164.57	
2021	24617	CLARK, RONALD D CLARK, VERTILLER D 42 BLK C DANIEL AVE BATTLEBORO, NC 27809	101.67	CITY ELDERLY/DISABLED EXEMPTION
		TOTAL RELEASE:	101.67	
<u>NASH COUNTY</u>				
2021	1001322	LYNCH, BABARA JANE 2708 SHIRE LANE ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	148.10	CITY PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	148.10	
2021	1001612	MASTROMARINO, SILVIANO JOSEPH 2434 PINE TREE LN ROCKY MOUNT, NC 27804	128.12	PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	128.12	

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

Consideration was given to the following Ordinance Amendments for FY 2021-2022:

- Project Ordinance:
Ordinance No. O-2022-10 entitled **GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT/AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT** - transfers appropriations from Economic Development Fund to new Special Revenue Fund (\$11,521,180 allocated to City from American Rescue Plan Act [ARPA] based on guidance from State); and
- Budget Ordinance:
Ordinance No. O-2022-11 entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 FOR UTILIZATION OF SPORTS COMPLEX SPONSORSHIP FUNDS** - appropriates funds to the General Fund (\$19,978) for purchase of new mower for use by Rocky Mount Sports Complex (funded by receipt of sponsorship funds)

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the recommendations outlined in the Consent Agenda be approved inclusive of approval of the tax releases and/or refunds and adoption of ordinances.

DONATION/ROCKY MOUNT POLICE EXPLORERS POST #774

The City Council was advised that Key Stone Realty has offered a donation of funds in the amount of \$2,000 to be used for equipment and uniforms for the Rocky Mount Police Explorers Post #774. Council was advised that Police exploring is affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America’s Learning for Life Program for young men and women ages 14-20 and has the goal of educating and involving youth in Police operations to interest them in a possible law enforcement career and in building mutual respect between community youth and the Police Department.

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the donation of \$2,000 from Key Realty be accepted to be used for Explorers Post #774 sponsored by the Rocky Mount Police Department.

AMENDMENTS TO POSITION CLASSIFICATION AND PAY PLAN

The City Council was advised that the FY 2022 Annual Operating Budget included funding for certain positions but did not reflect the changes within the departments as outlined below:

DEPT/DIV	CURRENT POSITION	PAY RANGE	NEW POSITION	PAY RANGE
Development Services/Inspections	Permit Technician	10	Permit Technician	11
Development Services/Administration	Plans Reviewer	19	Development Liaison	19
Development Services/Community Code	Community Code Supervisor	20	Community Code Administrator	23
Finance/Property Management	Property/Risk Manager	21	Property/Risk Manager	23

It was requested that the corrections outlined above be approved and that a resolution approving said amendments be adopted.

Upon request of the City Council at the beginning of today’s meeting, consideration of this item was tabled.

CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES/THE ROBERT BOBB GROUP

The City Council was provided with a contract with The Robert Bobb Group for financial advisory services for oversight of day-to-day financial operations of the City from January 25, 2022, through April 30, 2022, unless sooner terminated at a cost of \$16,000 per month.

At the recommendation of Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney and by a vote of the City Council at the beginning of today's meeting, consideration of this item was removed from the agenda.

ENGINEERING SERVICES TASK ORDER (COST-OF-SERVICE ANALYSIS/JACOBS ENGINEERING

The City Council was advised that a professional services agreement with Jacobs Engineering was approved on June 11, 2018, for a cost-of-service study relative to water, wastewater, and stormwater at a cost of \$179,000, inclusive of labor and expenses. Council was further advised that a Special Called Committee of the Whole meeting was called for November 5, 2018, at which time the Council was provided with a summary update of the study. It was noted that the study was never completed, and a final report was never received.

It was noted that at the request of City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney, the Director of Water Resources Brenton Bent contacted Jacobs Engineering on November 11, 2021, and informed them of the City's interest in having the study completed and received a revised scope of services at a proposed cost of \$111,000. Council was advised that though three of the original six tasks were completed at a cost of \$107,400, the data will need to be updated.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the task order with Jacobs Engineering for review, update and completion of water, wastewater, and stormwater costs of service study **(C-2022-1)** be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

In response to a question from Councilmember Daughtridge, Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney advised that the estimated time for completion of the study is six (6) months or before. Mr. Daughtridge stated his concern is that the City is paying \$39,000 to complete the study because it was not completed three (3) years prior. He added that the City's infrastructure for water and sewer is very important and said he cannot think of anything more equitable than clean water. He said his fear is that after the study is completed it gets put on a shelf. It was noted that the study is a cost-of-service study for water, wastewater and stormwater utilities and will look at operations and maintenance or capital costs, administrative costs, and debt service requirements in order to project revenue over the next five (5) years but will not look at staffing.

Councilmember Knight confirmed that Council is approving the contract for the services identified and asked if the Council had been

provided with information relative to the owners of and leadership structure of Jacobs Engineering adding that he intends to ask this question with regard to each bid and contract on today's agenda in order to make a point.

ELECTRICITIES ANNUAL UTILITY POLE COOPERATIVE BID AGREEMENTS AND PURCHASE CONTRACTS

The City Council was provided with the tabulation of bids received by ElectriCities for the Annual Utility Pole Fixed Price Purchase Contracts for wooden utility poles for twelve (12) participating municipalities. Council was advised that the City of Rocky Mount will execute the contracts on behalf of the participating municipalities. The information submitted by ElectriCities supporting award of the bids for purchase of the utility poles will be placed on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-2**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Blackwell, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the bids for wooden utility poles be awarded as follows and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the fixed price purchase contracts on behalf of the following twelve (12) participants:

- a) Stella-Jones - CCA and/or Penta - Apex, Greenville Utilities Commission, Kings Mountain, Morganton, Newton, Shelby, Statesville, Tarboro, Washington, High Point and Lexington; and
- b) Koppers - CCA-CE poles - Wilson

Councilmember Knight questioned if the Council had been provided with information relative to the makeup of the Board of ElectriCities. No discussion was held.

BID/2' AND 6' POLYETHYLENE PIPE PURCHASE (SADDLEBROOK SUBDIVISION)

The City Council received the tabulation of bids received for 2' and 6' polyethylene pipe for the Saddlebrook Subdivision. Proposals were received and opened on January 11, 2022, after all necessary legal procedures had been implemented including newspaper advertising and posting of the solicitation on the City's purchasing webpage and on the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website. The bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-3**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried that the bid be awarded to Sunrise Oilfield Supply at a total cost of \$122,860 and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute the bid contract on behalf of the City.

BID/23 TRANSMISSION POLE CHANGE OUTS

The City Council was informed that proposals were received and opened on November 26, 2021 for twenty-three (23) transmission pole change outs, after all necessary legal procedures, including newspaper advertising, had been implemented and the solicitation posted on the City's purchasing webpage, the North Carolina Historically Underutilized Businesses website and the North Carolina Interactive Purchasing System website and the bid tabulation is on file in the office of the City Clerk as **BD-2022-4**.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Walker, and unanimously carried the bid be awarded to Volt Power, LLC at a total cost of \$295,927.66 and that City staff be authorized to issue a purchase order for the equipment in accordance with the Council's award.

FY 2022 NORTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S CRIME COMMISSION GRANT

The City Council was informed that the Police Department is requesting authorization to apply for a \$50,000 grant through the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission to be used for upgrade to the Department's evidence storage facility in order to bring it up to CALEA standards. It was explained that no local match is required for the grant.

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that staff be authorized to submit the grant application on behalf of the City and that the Mayor and City Clerk and/or appropriate staff be authorized to execute any required documentation, including the application, subsequent grant agreement and any certifications and assurances on behalf of the City.

COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

Councilmember Knight questioned, based upon comments earlier in the meeting, if perhaps the current Council should wait until the election and new members are seated before voting on grant application and other City business or if it is felt the current Council is competent to run the City. He stated he asks the question to make a point.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated he did not hear the question in the same way as Councilmember Knight and said he has previously said he has an issue with follow-up relative to grants provided by the City and thinks the entire process for the award of grants should be reviewed.

Councilmember Knight requested that Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney explain the vetting process for award of grants. Mayor Roberson suggested Council move forward with consideration of the written agenda at this time and add this matter to the end of the meeting and no objection was raised.

APPOINTMENTS

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

Councilmember Miller questioned if any of the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees are unable to meet at this time due to being unable to establish a quorum. City Clerk Pamela O. Casey stated no one has reported an inability to meet but she is aware there are a number of vacancies which can sometimes present a problem. Councilmember Miller encouraged all to fill any remaining vacancies on the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees.

Councilmember Walker requested information relative to the Braswell Memorial Library Board and expressed a desire to serve on the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments Board.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner and seconded by Councilmember Blackwell that Councilmember Walker be appointed as the alternate member on the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments. The City Clerk advised the Council that Councilmember Joyner is currently serving as the alternate board member and Councilmember Knight is the current appointee to the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments. The vote and further consideration of this matter was tabled.

SEPARATION AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR AGREEMENT/ROCHELLE D. SMALL-TONEY (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

Consideration of a separation and independent contractor agreement with former City Manager Rochelle D. Small-Toney was added to the agenda in open session.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried that the separation and independent contractor agreement with Rochelle D. Small-Toney **(C-2022-2)** be approved and that the Mayor be authorized to execute the same on behalf of the City.

ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO UNITED COMMUNITY MINISTRIES (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

The City Council received a request from United Community Ministries for an allocation of funds for the community shelter on McDonald Street in the amount of \$13,750 relative to issues resulting from residents and/or potential residents of the shelter receiving positive COVID-19 tests. It was explained that the funding would be used for temporary housing to quarantine those residents/potential residents testing positive. Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney advised the City Council that the funding, if approved, would be provided from CDBG-CARES Act funds previously allocated for utility assistance and that the City would enter into an agreement with United Community Ministries outlining the guidelines for the use of said funding.

Councilmember Walker stated he is a huge advocate of United Community Ministries but requested that Council remain consistent and not vote on items added in the open meeting at the same meeting it is received.

Discussion was held relative to the shelter and the requested funding. Mr. Varney advised that all residents are required to be tested and receive a negative COVID test before admission to the shelter. He added there is a process for weekly and bi-weekly testing.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Knight, and unanimously carried that the funding request (\$13,750) be approved and that the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized to execute an agreement with United Community Ministries as outlined above **(C-2022-3)** on behalf of the City.

COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS/GRANT PROCESS (ADDED TO AGENDA IN OPEN MEETING)

Councilmember Knight requested that Interim City Manager Peter F. Varney explain the City's current process for award of and administration of grants.

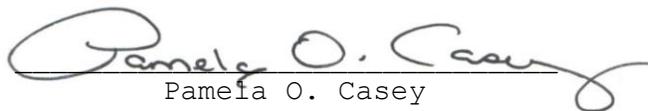
Mr. Varney explained that the grants administered by the Office of Community and Business Development consist of a three-part program and include grants for Urgent Repair, Housing Repair, and a Matching Rebate Program. He added that the policy for each program was adopted by Council and define the criteria for evaluating requests for assistance and determining available funding, adding the policy includes a process for appeal. Mr. Varney further outlined the process adding once the agreement is executed there is a follow-up process to ensure the work is done in accordance with the terms of the agreement. He told the Council the process has been reviewed by the City's auditors (internal and external).

CLOSED SESSION

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner, and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 5:28 p.m. for discussion relative to matters concerning personnel, attorney-client privilege, and property acquisition (*added in open session*). The minutes of the Closed Session shall be filed as a part of ESM-596 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 6:09 p.m. and there being no further business, the Council meeting was adjourned.


Pamela O. Casey
City Clerk