

July 10, 2023

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: Richard Joyner, T.J. Walker, Jr., Lige Daughtridge, Tom Harris and Jabaris Walker.

Members absent: André D. Knight and Reuben C. Blackwell, IV.

Staff present: Keith Rogers Jr., City Manager; Kim Batts, City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; JoSeth Bocook, Interim Director of the Department of Development Services; Felisa Hunter, Senior Human Relations Specialist; Brenton Bent, Water Resources Director; Chris Beschler, Energy Resources Director; Gregory Cotten, Chief Technology Officer; Latasha Hall, Director of Business and Collections Services; Darvin Moore, Fire Chief; Michael Roupp, Assistant Chief of Operations; Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Kirk Brown, Communications and Marketing Director; Cornelia McGee, Community and Business Development Director; Kena Cofield-Jones, Director of Human Resources; Kream Mosley, Deputy City Clerk; and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

Security Officers: Corporal Clay Wilder, Sergeant Chris Williams, and Senior Police Officer Shawn Battle.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and requested all in attendance to stand for a moment of silent prayer.

The Mayor stated he wanted to make the following announcements before roll call:

- He stated that Ms. Loretta Braswell, who heads up Citizens Academy, will be downstairs after the meeting to answer any questions individuals may have about the program; and
- There are several vacancies on the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees that need volunteers and please let your Councilmember or him know and they will see if there is an opening on the board they may have an interest in.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember T.J. Walker, and unanimously carried the minutes of the Special Called Committee of the Whole meetings held February 13, 2023 and March 6, 2023 and the Regular Scheduled City Council meeting held March 13, 2023 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

The minutes of the February 27, 2023 and March 6, 2023 Special Called Committee of the Whole meetings are as follows:

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023, AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING WITH MAYOR PRO TEM T.J. WALKER PRESIDING:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

T.J. Walker, Mayor Pro Tem
 André D. Knight
 Reuben C. Blackwell, IV
 Richard Joyner
 Lige Daughtridge
 Jabaris Walker
 Tom Harris
 Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.

RMPD Officers Present:

Westlyn Seabreeze
 Chris Ballard
 Ryan Helper
 John Feagans
 Jarrod Edmonds

Others Present:

David Joyner, Rocky Mount Event Center

STAFF PRESENT:

Peter F. Varney
 Kim Batts
 Robert Hassell
 Kenneth Hunter
 Abdul Baloch
 Elton Daniels
 Kirk Brown
 Kena Cofield-Jones
 Greg Cotten
 Latasha Hall
 Corey Mercer
 Cornelia McGee-Anthony
 Richard J. Rose

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem T.J. Walker called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Interim City Manager, Peter Varney said that on February 8th Chief Hassell and his staff made a well-done presentation to their law enforcement partners. He asked that it be presented in a future meeting so that the entire Council and community could see it.

Mr. Varney asked that they enter a closed session at the end of the meeting for a Property Acquisition, Attorney/Client item and a Personnel Matter.

RMPD: RECOGNIZING OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIPS - Robert Hassell

Chief Robert Hassell introduced some executive staff members who would be assisting him in the presentation. Captain Seabreeze-Investigations, Captain Ballard-Support Services, Captain Feagans-Special Operations, Captain Hepler-Administrative Services and Sgt. Edmonds-Administrative Services

Chief Hassell reported that the meeting with the federal partners started with looking at the city-wide crime numbers.

An overview of PowerPoint presentation provided to the Mayor and Council included:

- National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Part 1 crime comparisons by type.

CRIMES	YTD 2021	YTD 2022	+/-
Murder	13	20	7
Rape	13	9	-4
Commercial Robbery	31	30	-1
Individual Robbery	31	59	28
Aggravated Assault	414	344	-70
Violent	502	462	-40
Commercial B&E	129	67	-62
Residential B&E	161	192	31
Non-Residential B&E	36	35	-1
Larceny	891	1026	135

MV Theft	89	132	43
Arson	16	17	1
Property	1322	1469	147
Total	1824	1931	107

• **Part 1 Crimes Comparison Chart - 5 Year Trend**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Violent	399	413	608	502	462
Property	1596	1592	1560	1322	1469
Total	1995	2002	2168	1824	1931

Chief Hassell said in 2019 they transitioned to a better way to track crime. He said since using NIBRS there has been small increases because every crime for one incident is now reported.

Captain Seabreeze gave a presentation on juvenile crimes:

• **Part 1 Juvenile Crime 2021 vs 2022**

	Offenders	6-11	12-14	15-17
2021	40	6	13	21
2022	76	2	20	54

	2021	2022
Aggravated Assault	14	20
Arson	1	5
Individual Robbery	4	4
Murder	0	2
Rape	2	0
Commercial B&E	3	1
Larceny	7	21
MV Theft	2	15
Non-Residential B&E	4	0
Residential B&E	3	8

Chief Hassell feels that more needs to be done in prevention and intervention with juveniles. He said research has shown lower recidivism when you lower the age. He shared that some would say it's a gateway for adults to use juveniles to commit crimes.

Captain Seabreeze reported that out of the 20 homicides reported in 2022, 70% were domestic related.

Chief Hassell noted the following challenges - Calls for service:

- Mental Health 1572
- Overdose 90
- Narcotics 317
- Domestic Violence 2517
- Gun Related Crimes 532

Councilmember Daughtridg asked if there was a correlation between substance abuse in the homicides where there was domestic violence.

Chief Hassell replied that there were signs of alcohol and drug use in some of the domestic violence and homicide related calls. He has not looked to see if there is a correlation.

Councilmember Joyner asked Chief Hassell if he thought domestic violence issues was causing more juvenile violence.

Chief Hassell feels there needs to be more intervention and prevention at a younger age.

Captain Hepler gave an overview of Technological Implementations:

- ShotSpotter is a series of acoustics that locates gunfire inside certain parts of the City within 30 to 40 seconds.
 - 1608 Shell Casing Recovered
- Flocksafety is the license plate reader system
 - 20 throughout the City
- Fusus is a real time situational awareness platform that brings all the technologies together
 - 156 Alerts
 - 263 Connected Cameras
 - \$186,563 Property Value Recovered
- NIBIN - National Integrated Ballistic Network
 - 418 Guns Test Fired
 - 556 Firearms & Casing Examinations
 - 154 NIBIN Hits
 - 137 Arrests
- Partnered with multiple businesses to use 263 live cameras

Captain Helper reported that the Police Department has a part-time examiner who makes shell casing comparisons. He gave the following 2022 Firearm update:

- Firearms Examiner Case Matching found 77 Firearms linked to 125 cases.
- Aggravated Assaults with Guns: 130
- Robbery with Firearm: 53
- Shooting into Occupied Building/Vehicle: 23
- Possess Firearm by Minor: 14
- Possess Firearm by Convicted Felon: 59

Chief Hassell added that they house a NIBIN unit at the Rocky Mount Police Department and examine casing for 15 other agencies.

Captain Ballard gave a summary of Community Involvement & Prevention:

- PAL (Police Athletics/Activities League)
- D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)
- EKG2-Educating Kids on Gangs & Guns
- Community Resource Connection
- Community Gang Awareness 101

Chief Hassell added that the Event Center graciously hosted the Community Resource Connection event. He stated 75 to 100 people attended. He said 15 to 20 different community resource organizations were present.

Sergeant Edmonds presented the Department's new Mental Health initiative. He reported some of the stakeholders included UNC Nash, Trillium and EastPointe. Sgt Edmonds said that they partnered with Integrated Family Services to have a licensed clinician on site in the Police Department to respond calls for service for the following:

- Non-emergent mental health
- Behavioral and truant juvenile
- Overdose
- Suicide threat

Goal:

- Reduce vigorous interaction between those special populations and law enforcement.
- Give officers and community members real-time resources from licensed clinicians in the field.
- Reduce the number of non-emergent hospitalizations.

Chief Hassell shared that 60 percent of the individuals involuntarily committed were assessed and released back into the community.

Councilmember Joyner asked:

- is there any support for the family when they are released?
- is the person released to the hospital or does the officer have to stay?

Chief Hassell replied if they are assessed and deemed to be no threat and nonviolent, the officer can be released. He said that Officers are not called back when the individual is released, so he can't speak to where they go. Chief Hassell said that his understanding is, if the person doesn't need to be involuntarily committed the co-responder will assist in making the connection with a provider in the community. He hopes this program will help with follow-up and ensuring people don't fall through the cracks.

Councilmember Blackwell asked if Trillium and Eastpointe combined to contract with a third party to fund this initiative.

Chief Hassell replied that Integrative Health Services has always been funded by both agencies.

Councilmember Blackwell asked if they have 24-hour, 7 day a week dedicated staff.

Chief Hassell responded that a mobile crisis team is available 24 hours. He said that one full-time person will be in the Police Department during peak hours.

Councilmember Blackwell feels there is no comprehensive answer to the challenge of providing mental health services. He said North Carolina deregulated mental health and there are no places to send people. He feels the mental health system is severely broken. Councilmember Blackwell applauded the Police Department for thinking out of the box. He recommends having more people available on the therapeutic and follow through side.

Councilmember Harris asked if there is a correlation between the 60% that are released and additional crime occurring?

Chief Hassell said that they haven't looked to see if there is any correlation. He feels if there was an incident shortly after, Officers should be familiar with the name.

Captain Helper presented Proposed New Technology Addressing Gun and Crime:

- ShotSpotter Gun Management: Cloud based system
- ShotSpotter Connect: Artificial intelligence-driven analysis covering the entire city

Captain Feagans presented the following continued initiatives:

- Project Safe Neighborhoods
- Focused Deterrent Violent Offender Call-In

Partnerships:

- Violent Crime Action Plan (VCAP)
- Enhanced Gun Screenings

Mr. Varney said that although Chief Hassell gives a monthly update it was helpful to see the partnerships and strategies.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

CITY COUNCIL RETREAT - Peter Varney

Interim City Manager Peter Varney inquired if any Councilmembers planned on attending the North Carolina League of Municipalities Conference April 25, 26 and 27 in Concord. He stated that Concord was one of the locations mentioned previously for the retreat and asked if it was the will of the Council to stay in Concord April 27th and 28th for the retreat.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker said that the majority voted to have the retreat outside of Rocky Mount. He felt that since everyone wasn't attending the conference in Concord, a new date that doesn't conflict with Mr. Rogers' staff retreat should be found and the possible location be Durham.

Mr. Varney suggested Thursday April 20th and Friday April 21st.

Councilmember Blackwell said that in times past they met Wednesday afternoon, a full day Thursday with council priority issues and a half day with department directors on Friday.

Councilmember Harris said that he wanted to discuss having the retreat at the Event Center. He suggested a presentation from cities that have done an excellent job on downtown revitalization or affordable housing. He said after hearing from these cities a bus trip could be scheduled to spend quality time there. He stated that he wants to compare municipalities. He said if they could be brought to The Event Center it would give staff and citizens the opportunity to attend. Councilmember Harris asked how much is in the budget for the retreat? He said that the previous Manager said \$17,500 was the budget to go to Asheville and it ended up being more than \$70,000.

Councilmember Blackwell said that these retreats have provided the leadership of the City with the ability to see what has and has not worked. He feels every retreat presented the opportunity to learn in person what a PowerPoint slide or Zoom meeting would not facilitate. He said they have had conversations, discussions and built relationships with cities throughout the state. He asked in business what kind of value they place in training leadership? He added, in sending your team where their thoughts can be inspired and come back with the best practices. Councilmember Blackwell said this is not his idea of a vacation. He said that he works for the benefit of the communities that he serves and that his constituents don't have a problem with him going. He shared that they have said when he goes, he comes back with something good that they can see happen in the City. He stated that he's concerned about why questions aren't being asked all the time about big dollar items. He said it took 10 years to figure out how to do The Event Center. Councilmember Blackwell said they went to cities where they had event centers that worked and those that didn't. He said at a retreat in Durham they found DPAC, the only working convention center. He added they had a chance to talk with them face to face, walk through the building, and see what worked and what didn't work. He said that it paid off.

Councilmember Harris responded that he didn't say that the Council should not go anywhere.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker said that he did his due diligence and polled everyone. He received 3 votes for the Event Center and 5 for wherever there are projects and initiatives that the City of Rocky Mount could glean from. He said his research showed Durham is the most similar in demographics.

Councilmember Harris said that he participated remotely when the retreat was in Asheville. He shared that the quality of the Zoom was poor. Councilmember Harris asked that top notch connectivity be available so that all citizens can see and hear what's been done at the retreat.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker said that he supports investments into equipment and technology moving forward in everything they do. He stated Mr. Varney will get tentative dates after polling all members. He said looking at a half day on Wednesday and Friday and a full day on Thursday. With two days for Council and one for staff.

Councilmember Harris said make it soon because the budget is coming along.

Councilmember Daughtridge asked that a synopsis of what was discussed regarding housing in Asheville be provided.

Mayor Roberson said that he thought the focus was on land trust.

Councilmember Knight read a definition of retreat. He stated a retreat is an opportunity for team members to come together away from the office and any typical responsibility. He said he believed a citizen said, a retreat is to go away from your enemy.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Information only; no formal action.

CITY SERVICES FOR EVENT CENTER - Peter Varney

Interim City Manager Peter Varney reported that the City does use Police Officers to provide security at The Event Center. He stated in earlier times Officer participation was voluntary. He said off-duty Officers primarily work inside the Event Center during events. Mr. Varney said that, when necessary, RMPD also provides on-duty Officers to support outside the Event Center. He reported that the costs presented are for the overtime expenses. He said that the data for the shift work was not maintained because the Officers were assigned to work. Mr. Varney said it would be necessary for payroll to go back and see who worked what shifts, on what days and where they were assigned to work. He suggested going forward to keep up with that data and then charging it to a separate budgetary account. He said that costs relative to policing inside and outside the Event Center would be known. Mr. Varney said that The Event Center does charge for security and it's shown as a line item on the sales invoice. He stated that revenue comes to the City but it wasn't being separated. He said the revenue for security needs to be moved into an account to cover that cost.

Councilmember Blackwell stated people across the state of North Carolina are talking about The Event Center. He said thousands of people come here from all over the state and many parts of the country. Councilmember Blackwell feels that the bottom line is that people are bringing millions of dollars into Rocky Mount businesses. He said that the hotels are delighted and restaurants would not be as prosperous. He shared that he didn't know of any city council in this state that has a phenomenal asset like The Event Center that continues to criticize it publicly. He said that he would be delighted for the day when all will say thank God people are coming. Councilmember Blackwell said hotels are needed downtown and asked who is opposed to financial and fiscal growth.

Mayor Roberson said that he thinks the issue is the police force being short staffed.

Councilmember Blackwell said that if police officers can be sent to the school system to help, which he agrees should be done, then downtown can be a priority also.

Mayor Roberson said he agrees that protection is needed, and he is 100% in favor.

Councilmember Daughtridge said the question is about allocating the funds. He stated in the budget that it looks like funds were taken away from the police department, transit and parks and rec. He said that the budget needs to reflect the actual revenues and expenses of The Event Center. He shared that his real concern is the police department being down 41 officers. He agreed that 5 are allocated as school resource officers. Councilmember Daughtridge acknowledged that security inside and patrol at the Event Center is necessary. He feels they need to rethink and be innovative about getting it done. Councilmember Daughtridge said that the Event Center needs to be successful because the citizens of Rocky Mount invested the money. He feels other departments should not have to take money from their budgets. He said from his understanding that when The Event Center doesn't get volunteers, Officers that were off get mandatory overtime. He's concerned that they can't spend time with their families or resting. He feels it's their responsibility to make sure the Officers are getting time for rest. Councilmember Daughtridge said from a from a fiscal standpoint, it's their responsibility to make The Event Center work. It's their responsibility to talk positively about it. He said it's also their responsibility, if things throughout the entire city are not working properly, need to be changed, or done differently, to bring it up.

Councilmember Knight said that Officers have shared that they don't like how they are being compensated.

Councilmember Blackwell said there is a methodology and a third-party entity that compensates. He said that they do not just get paid straight overtime.

Councilmember Daughtridge said that the memo shows the budget has been impacted.

Councilmember Blackwell said increase the budget, that's what's done when the police department comes with other priorities. He stated that they try to get them what they need to make it work and the same thing should be done for The Event Center. He said more event programming and marketing is needed.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated he created and paid for a Community Calendar that showed all the wonderful things going on in Rocky Mount and the previous city manager did away with.

Councilmember Blackwell replied that he supported Councilmember Daughtridge's great idea. He said that he's in support of a more robust social media page. He feels if press releases can be done every day about crime, so can the great things that are happening throughout the city. Councilmember Blackwell said he wants the Chief, and his team of public service officers get what they need. He said if the budget needs to be increased to provide appropriate policing, he's right there for it. He stated that he wants Rocky Mount to move from having the commentary about not being in a safe place, which is not true, to being one of the best places in North Carolina to discover which is true.

Councilmember Daughtridge said that he didn't disagree, he was talking about the budget being impacted.

Councilmember Blackwell stated they needed to look at it and increase the allocation, so they can have what they need.

Councilmember Harris said that it will be a great day when we have 41 additional officers on the payroll.

Councilmember Knight stated that the City never had a fully staffed police department.

Councilmember Daughtridg asked when a position is not filled what happens to the allocated money within the budget.

Interim City Manager Varney replied that goes into the fund balance.

Councilmember Daughtridg replied how are we going to get together, if we keep on going at each other?

Mayor Roberson stated if it's simply how the police are being compensated that's something they can talk about.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker asked Chief Hassell what he feels he needs.

Councilmember Harris said that Chief Mercer is retiring and there could be critical needs in the fire department.

Councilmember Knight stated that we are going to make all departments whole.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker said there are a million issues and not enough money to solve them all.

Interim City Manager Varney said that a pay plan will be presented in the next four or five weeks, so this conversation could be saved.

Councilmember Joyner stated that Event Center Manager, David Joyner and his staff have done a phenomenal job.

Councilmember Blackwell said that they were recently highlighted on PBS.

Councilmember Harris shared that he was at the Event Center with his family from Raleigh who were visiting.

Councilmember Harris said that he talked to both policemen who were inside working. He stated safety is not a problem. He shared that his son, who has been to a lot of places in Raleigh with children's activities, said "Daddy y'all got a wonderful place". He said as a new member, he would like to see the plan that shows how The Event Center operations will cover operation expenses in 2026. He feels that will be a tremendous day for all in the city of Rocky Mount. Councilmember Harris wanted Event Center Manager David Joyner to know that he made a comment on LinkedIn.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker stated that the Secretary of State was at the Event Center this past week as well. He said that he thinks the conversation is more about prioritizing finances in the budget. He said that's a conversation for the retreat and they can move forward from there.

David Joyner, Event Center Manager, shared that he and ACM, Elton Daniels are going to SFC corporate office in Clearwater for their strategic planning meetings.

Interim City Manager Varney stated that bids for health care services for city employees have been received. There is a proposal from Aetna and Blue Cross Blue Shield. He stated that this needs to

move on quickly and said it could be put on the committee the whole agenda for March 13th. Mr. Varney said to do that, it needs to be acted on at the council meeting that night. Mr. Varney said an alternative to that would be to schedule another Committee of the Whole Meeting for Monday, March 6, 2023. He noted that it would be City Manager Keith Roger's first day. He suggested a special called meeting March 6th to just discuss the health care proposals and then schedule it for approval at the March 13 meeting.

Councilmember Daughtridge asked about the differences.

Mr. Varney said they're going to be recommending Aetna. He said that the services by Aetna look a lot the same going forward as they have been these past couple of years.

Councilmember Knight stated he heard a lot of complaints about Aetna. He said that he didn't know if the HR Director received information on employees who are satisfied or dissatisfied.

Mr. Varney said that he would schedule a committee of the whole meeting for late afternoon next Monday.

Councilmember Blackwell asked that it be after 2:00, if possible.

Councilmember Knight asked if employees have ever been surveyed.

Mr. Varney responded that a survey hasn't been done. He stated that they hear from the employees.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker stated that in the advanced leadership course at School of Government, they shared that we all have values. But all of our values are different. He said so in conversations about leading the city they all come to the table with different values and perspectives. He added the way to work together through those as leaders is to respect the differences of each other's values. Mayor Pro Tem Walker said he thinks sometimes in conversations where values are different, passions, and even temperatures rise. He said that he wouldn't call it anger. He stated that together they are trying to lead a city of 60,000 people who also have different values and it must be done with respect. He said that he didn't have to tell anybody what respect is or what it looks like. He thanked Mr. Varney for his leadership, as his time was winding down.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Pro Tem Walker requested a motion for City Council to enter into a closed session for Property Acquisition, Attorney Client Privilege and Personnel Matter.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried that the City Council enter into Closed Session at 7:13 p.m.

The minutes of the Closed Session shall be placed on file as **ESM-628** at the end of **Minute Book 38** upon approval for release by the City Attorney.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the Mayor Pro Tem Walker adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

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

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HELD MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2023, AT 4:00 P.M. IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE FREDERICK E. TURNAGE MUNICIPAL BUILDING WITH MAYOR PRO TEM T.J. WALKER PRESIDING:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

T.J. Walker, Mayor Pro Tem
 André D. Knight
 Reuben C. Blackwell, IV
 Lige Daughtridge
 Jabaris Walker
 Tom Harris
 Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr.

Via Zoom:

Richard Joyner

Others Present:

Mark Browder, Mark III Insurance Services

STAFF PRESENT:

Peter F. Varney
 Keith Rogers Jr.
 Kim Batts
 Robert Hassell
 Kenneth Hunter
 Elton Daniels
 Kirk Brown
 Kena Cofield-Jones
 Greg Cotten
 Latasha Hall
 Wanda Pipkin
 Brenton Bent
 Kream Mosley
 Monica Brantley
 Richard J. Rose

OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Pro Tem T.J. Walker called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He welcomed City Manager Keith Rogers Jr. to the neighborhood. He thanked Peter Varney for his tenure as Interim City Manager. Mayor Pro Tem Walker also let Mr. Varney know there was an issue with receiving notification about his retirement gathering. Mayor Pro Tem Walker said that he appreciated Mr. Varney stepping in and wished him well.

Interim Assistant City Manager Peter Varney reported that he received responses to the request for medical insurance coverage. He said there is a tight time frame to get the contract approved. He called on Human Resources Director, Kena Cofield-Jones to make her presentation.

MEDICAL INSURANCE - Kena Cofield-Jones

Kena Cofield-Jones, Director of Human Resources stated that she was going to give a presentation on medical insurance and that Benefit Broker, Mark Browder would assist with answering questions.

An overview of PowerPoint presentations provided to the Mayor and Council included:

Bid Process Dates:

RFP Finalized & Released	1/17/2023
RFP Closes	2/3/2023
Bid Review Mtg w/Mark III	2/21/2023, 2/22/2023
Internal Bid Review	2/24/2023
Bid Determination w/Mark III	3/1/2023

Medical Insurance Implementation Dates:

Committee of the Whole Meeting	3/6/2023
Council Vote	3/13/2023
Finalize Benefit Guidebooks	3/17/2023
Open Enrollment Begins	3/24/2023
Open Enrollment Ends	4/6/2023
Open Enrollment Finalized	4/21/2023
System Testing and Final Prep	5/25/2023
Benefits Effective	7/1/2023

Medical Proposals were requested from:

- Aetna
- Allegiance
- BCBSNC
- Brighton
- CIGNA
- Meritain
- UHR
- UMR

Kena Cofield-Jones reported that responses were received from Aetna, BCBSNC and CIGNA. She said that Aetna and Blue Cross/Blue Shield were considered since Cigna had a million-dollar laser.

2023 - 2024 Bid Responses

	Current: Aetna	Option 1: Aetna Renewal/Aetna Network/CVS Pharmacy/Paid/12 5/Firm	Option 2: BCBSNC/IHA Pharmacy/24/12/ 125K/Firm	Option3: Cigna/Cigna Network/ESI Pharmacy/24/12 /125K Contingent
Fees are proprietary and confidential per proposal				
Admin Fee	\$17.37	\$21.00	\$42.00	\$6.00
Broker Compensation	\$2.13	\$2.13	\$2.13	\$2.13
Network Access Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$23.60
Routine Vision baked into to medical plan	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.30
Specific Stop Loss	\$115.29	\$154.80	\$152.93	\$145.93
Aggregate Stop-loss	\$0.00			
Total Administration Fees	\$134.79	\$177.93	\$197.06	\$177.96
Monthly Cost based on 996 Employees	\$134,250.84	\$177,218.28	\$196,271.76	\$177,248.16
EAP priced separately by Aetna (PMPM, included w/Aetna)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.38	\$1.38
Total Fees Yearly	\$1,611,010.08	\$2,126,619.36	\$2,371,754.88	1,971,379.88
Wellness and Implementation Fund Credit	(60,000.00)	(75,000.00)	(150,000.00)	(75,000.00)
Fee Holiday Credit	(20,000.00)	(75,000.00)		(88,444.80)
Communication Allowance Credit		(2,500.00)		
Pharmacy Management Fund Credit				(3,647.00)
Implementation Fund Credit				(5,000.00)
Gross Yearly Fees -Wellness & Admin Fee Credits (3 months)	1,531,010.08	1,974,119.36	2,221,754.88	1,971,379.88

Minus Pharmacy Contract Improvements	(408,030.00)	(918,417.24)	(1,282,380.00)	(1,060,994.58)
Net Yearly Cost - Including Pharmacy Contract Improvements	1,122,980.08	1,055,702.12	939,374.88	910,385.30
2 Lasers: Vascular Device & Hemophiliac for Cigna; one for Aetna Hemophiliac	\$325,000.00	\$325,000.00	\$425,000.00	\$1,000,135.00
Total Yearly Costs (Fees, Pharmacy Improvements, and Lasers)	\$1,447,980.08	\$1,380,702.12	\$1,364,374.88	\$1,910,520.30

Kena Cofield-Jones gave the following summary:

- Blue Cross is the lowest bid
- Aetna is the most responsive lowest bid
- The variance is about \$16,000
- Aetna 1.2% higher in their bid than Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- Aetna's bid is 4.6% lower than the current cost
- Aetna has improved their offering this year

Councilmember requests/comments:

Mayor Roberson asked if the 325,000 noted in lasers is a deductible.

Mark Browder said that it is a pooling level that's higher.

Mayor Roberson said that if they aren't going to pay above that number, the City's liability would be on the top side.

Mr. Browder agreed, for one individual.

Councilmember Harris asked:

- are there 996 approved positions or if that is the number of current employees
- is filling vacancies being considered in these calculations

Mr. Browder responded:

- It's the number of active employees and retirees
- It is based on actual numbers today

Kena Cofield-Jones added that in pharmacy improvement, Aetna explains how the credit is gained. She said Blue Cross is not providing the information at this time. She doesn't know how to get to the Blue Cross credit.

Councilmember Daughtridg asked how the City gets to the \$918 in credit.

Mr. Browder said Aetna gave a number that they guarantee the City will receive. He said they were precise in what will be given in contract improvement versus Blue Cross. In the materials that were sent back, Blue Cross did not lay out methodology by how the City would get those credits.

Councilmember Daughtridg asked if \$918 is specific to what is paid for in medication.

Mr. Browder answered it's improving the financial terms of the rebate contract. He said the rebates have increased over the last several years and that affects the credits that the City gains. Mr. Browder explained the way rebates work is the pharmaceutical industry pays plan sponsors monetary value for being on the formulary. He said Aetna/CVS Caremark improved it substantially to have the opportunity to retain the City of Rocky Mount as a customer.

Mayor Roberson said that basically they are sharing the rebates.

Mr. Browder said that they were before, but now are at a much higher level.

Councilmember Daughtridg asked when the City switched from Blue Cross to Aetna if rebates were received directly and did it change?

Mr. Browder responded that with Blue Cross rebates were probably averaging \$100,000 a year. The contract terms continue to improve as they push Aetna. He said to the \$400,000 range in this bid process.

Councilmember Blackwell asked:

- will anything change for the individual member
- will the individual deductible remain the same
- have there been complaints or concerns about the deductible rates

Mr. Browder replied correct, there will no changes and the deductible will remain the same.

Kena Cofield-Jones responded that there were complaints about the deductible. She stated last year there was a 20% reduction. She said most complaints are about the family plan. Mrs. Cofield Jones said that one member experienced a traumatic event. The employee had some questions and 2 Aetna representatives reached out and worked with the employee directly. She said that Aetna also met internally to work on improvements. Mrs. Cofield Jones reported that in the bid response Aetna said they would work to answer questions or present something different. In the process, Blue Cross responded and said no.

Councilmember Blackwell asked if staff has experienced better customer service.

Kena Cofield-Jones answered, yes. She said they have a great working relationship. Customer Service has responded in less time than they said they would.

Mr. Browder gave the following highlights:

- Dependent premiums were reduced by 20%
- Increased HAS contribution
- No budgetary change for the City in 3 to 4 years
- Financially stable plan

Councilmember Daughtridg asked:

- With the feedback regarding dependent and family coverage, is it necessary to look at neighboring cities
- How many members are on family coverage
- What percentage of City staff say they can't afford family coverage

Kena Cofield-Jones said that there have been complaints about family coverage being high but hasn't specifically had anyone say that did not get it because of that.

Councilmember Blackwell said that's a problem everywhere.

Kena Cofield-Jones said that benefit comparisons with neighboring localities were looked at as a part of the Class and Comp study. She said the City's benefits were very competitive.

Councilmember Daughtridge said that everyone isn't going to like what they must pay.

Mr. Browder said that there are about 250 dependents on the plan.

He shared the following:

- There is no pharmacy contract narrowing of the formulary
- It's the same formulary
- No additional liability for those contract improvements
- There will always be formulary adjustments throughout the year
- CVS Caremark will have a continuum of medications on their formulary
- No tightening or restrictive formulary in this bid process

Via Zoom Councilmember Joyner asked which provider would work better if an unpredictable issue arose

Kena Cofield-Jones responded from the bid response, Aetna. She replied that they said they would work with the City and that has been the experience. Blue Cross said no, they would not work with us.

Councilmember Knight said that in a previous meeting he asked what percentage of employees experienced problems with insurance. He asked Kena if he heard her say it was very few.

Kena Cofield-Jones said she knows of one specifically that reached out to HR. She said that they helped the employee work with Aetna on the issue.

Councilmember Knight said that he spoke with someone at Aetna and the person who had the concern did as well. The questions about deductibles were answered. Councilmember Knight said customer service is very important. He feels that when someone is the hospital, they can't advocate for themselves. He added that it can be difficult to discuss matters over the phone. He said employees need to know they can contact HR to navigate through issues with Aetna.

Kena Cofield-Jones shared that the Account Manager and Director have reached out to employees directly. In addition to coming to speak to employees so they can get the service they need.

Medical Insurance Recommendation: Aetna

- Willing to work with us
- Shared Pharmacy Information upfront
- Lower Admin Fees
- Communications Allowance
- EAP Services included
- Lower Cost for Stop Loss Coverage

Mayor Pro Tem Walker asked if 80% is the standard for dental insurance coverage.

Mr. Browder replied that the normal plan is 100% for preventive, 80% for basic and 50% for major services.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION. Received report; no formal action

City Council Discussion:

Mayor Pro Tem Walker asked if retreat dates had been finalized.

Ken Hunter, Assistant to the City Manager for Budget and Evaluation Hunter suggested May 3rd through 5th based on responses that he received.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker said he felt that would put staff at a burden trying to finish the budget.

Councilmember Blackwell asked if individual or smaller budget meetings could be held. He suggested the proposed budget be presented, then each member could hash out what is important to them. He feels then the only things discussed would be the true initiatives that the Council want to take.

Ken Hunter said he appreciated the consideration but when looking at the dates it was determined that it can work. Mr. Hunter informed all that under normal circumstances the publication of the budget would be May 15th. He said that The City Manager will be ready to present the budget at the Council meeting on May 22nd.

Councilmember Blackwell asked if the CIP will be available at the retreat.

Ken Hunter replied that the plan is to have the CIP at the retreat.

Mayor Pro Tem Walker confirmed Council Retreat dates as May 3rd - May 5th in Durham, NC.

Ken Hunter stated since the dates have been confirmed that he will solicit requests through the Durham Convention and Visitor's Bureau. He said that he would send notification when bids came back.

Councilmember Knight asked Mr. Hunter if he checked with NC Central University.

Ken Hunter said that they will reach out to NC Central.

Councilmember Knight said that they have met on an UNC campus, and he wants the Council to have the HBCU experience.

ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the Mayor Pro Tem adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

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

APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER

City Manager Keith Rogers Jr. provided the following community update. The City Manager reported that:

- Stated pleased to announce the appointment of Darvin Moore as the City's new Fire Chief who is at a conference this week
- Stated the City has an internationally recognized and respected Fire Department, and he has all faith and trust that Chief Moore will continue in that great excellence for our Fire Department
- Stated he would also like to announce the appointment of Michael Baughn as the Director of Central Services
- Stated that the services that Mr. Baughn provides were previously included in the Finance Department and have been extracted into this newly created department to

help streamline the financial operations and focus on city-owned real estate as well as risk management

- Stated the blockbuster movie hit Top Gun: Maverick will be shown at the next Lawn Chair Theatre this Friday in the lawn of the Imperial Centre and the movie will begin at dusk
- Stated the Police Department will be giving out free firearm locks on Thursday, July 20th from 4 to 6 pm in the Walmart parking lot at 1511 Benvenue Road
- Stated the Embers will be performing at our next Downtown Live on Thursday, July 20th and that will begin at 6 pm

PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor opened the meeting for petitions from the public and outlined guidelines for public petitions. He called on the following individuals for public comment and a brief summary of comments is outlined below:

Crystal Wimes-Anderson

- Stated she lives in Ward one and wants to talk about education
- Stated there is a 20/30 NC degree attainment goal and there is a decline in the growth rate in Rocky Mount (both Edgecombe and Nash counties)
- Stated she would be in support of School Choice vouchers, especially if transportation was provided
- Stated it would allow parents to get back to work and have their children go to a school of their choice
- Stated statistics show that within Edgecombe County there are no private school enrollments and no School Choice vouchers being utilized
- Stated the City could look at a couple options so more kids can have access such as considering making private schools on the routes in addition to providing additional funding for the Boys and Girls club so they can further assist more neighborhoods in our community

Addul Ali

- Stated he is here tonight as a concerned North Carolinian
- Stated there is a narrative, not just here but across the state, that racism and the legacy of slavery is to blame for the issues facing our community and people are starting to wake up from this narrative
- Stated that black leaders are the majority across the state and while racism does exist and is an issue that needs to be dealt with, the real issues are that there was only a 22% turnout rate for the last municipal election, black on black crime, education rates, literacy rates, suspension rates, and school-to-prison pipeline

Adrienne Copland

- Stated there is a common belief that no one can buy real property in North Carolina without first paying all of the property taxes that are owed but that is not entirely true
- Stated NC General Statute 161-31 permits the county to prohibit the recording of deed transfers unless the county tax recorder certifies that there is no delinquent property taxes
- Stated the General Statute only applies to City taxes when they are collected by the county and the City of Rocky Mount collects their own taxes, therefore, the Statute does not prevent a deed from being recorded when delinquent taxes are owed to Rocky Mount
- Stated this can cause the buyers to be responsible for the taxes that were accrued prior to their ownership

- Stated is this is not addressed, the City is missing out on revenue and adding to the City's housing issue by allowing unpaid taxed to cloud property titles
- Stated she would like the City to address this issue

Arnie Jones

- Stated he is here to speak again in reference to Environmental Services
- Stated there were a lot of promises and guarantees made at the last meeting and even when the pay study came out, it did not benefit long-term employees in his department
- Stated they have been slighted for years, they cannot get someone to even come speak with his department
- Stated they are short staff, they need CDL drivers and have vacancies as well and they are tired

Nathlyn Ohree

- Stated that she came here to ask if the sanitation workers issue had been addressed and she is sad to see that it has not
- Stated she attended the Juneteenth Festival in the heat until 9 PM and at the end of the night she was cleaning up alongside the sanitation workers
- Stated they were even working on the Fourth of July and came by on Saturday to pick up the recycling and that shows a lot of dedication
- Stated the issue with the sanitation workers is serious
- Requested that there is something more concrete provided at the next meeting regarding the sanitation workers

Ja'Quan R. Phillips

- Stated he had spoken with some member of City Council and with Ms. Kim to see about bringing awareness to Sickle Cell
- Stated that is here to see what the City can do to help advocate more for Sickle Cell awareness
- Stated in 2014 his sister passed away from Sickle Cell and there is not a lot of devotion to Sickle Cell awareness like other diseases

City Manager Rogers stated the City Clerk had spoken with him about Mr. Phillips' request and that he and the City Clerk will collaborate to see what can be done.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner seconded by Councilmember Jabaris Walker, and unanimously carried that the Consent Agenda be approved, and that the following items on the Consent Agenda [Items 8(A) through 8(D) be approved as follows and more specifically:

A. FY 2022-2023 PROJECT ORDINANCE

Ordinance No. O-2023-101 entitled **CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE THELONIOUS MONK PARK PLAYGROUND PROJECT** (appropriates funds awarded by the Longleaf Fund (\$80,000) and funds in General Fund (\$120,000) for the replacement of vandalized playground equipment at the Thelonious Monk Park - \$200,000;

B. LEASE AGREEMENT/154 EAST THOMAS STREET (MANHATTAN BUILDING)

The City Council was provided with the following lease agreement with Kristie Hilliard:

- 154 East Thomas Street (Manhattan Building) - 3-year lease; annual rent = \$6,600; term June 14, 2023 - June 13, 2026

Resolution No. R-2023-45 entitled **RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO LEASE OR RENT PROPERTY** be adopted. The Resolution authorizes the City Clerk to advertise the Notice of Intent to approve said lease agreement.

C. RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY PROPERTY TO THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

That **RESOLUTION NO. R-2023-46** entitled **RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY PROPERTY TO THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB TO BE USED TO CARRY OUT A PUBLIC PURPOSE** be adopted. This resolution states that North Carolina General Statute § 160A-279 authorizes cities to convey by private sale any real property they own to a nonprofit corporation which carries out a public purpose the city itself is authorized to carry out and authorizes the City Clerk to publish the notice as required. The resolution further includes the following conditions, covenants, and restrictions to be set out in the deed conveying the property to the Boys and Girls Club:

- The Boys & Girls Club will renovate, rehabilitate, and improve the buildings located on the Property in accordance with plans and specifications submitted to and approved by the City (the "**Improvements**"). The Boys & Girls Club will complete the Improvements on or before the 31st day of December, 2025.
- From and after the completion of the Improvements and the issuance of a certificate of occupancy, the Boys & Girls Club shall operate the Programs described above for the benefit of the youth of the Rocky Mount Area and the citizens of Rocky Mount generally.
- The Boys & Girls Club shall submit annual reports to the City on a form acceptable to the City detailing the operation of the Boys & Girls Club and the use of the Property for the operation of the Programs described above. The report for the period from the date of the issuance of the certificate of occupancy to December 31st of that year shall be due on or before January 31st of the following year, and thereafter on each January 31st of the year just completed until the thirtieth (30th) anniversary of the date the first report is due.

D. CITY COUNCIL MEETING/CANCELLATION

The Committee of the Whole Work Session and Regular Council Meeting Scheduled for August 14, 2023 were canceled due to a conflict with Electricities Annual Conference.

PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST

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

- Request by Kena Avent to rezone a parcel containing + 0.93-acres located on the northwest corner of Sunset Avenue and Franklin Street from O-I to B-4

Interim Development Services Director, JoSeth Bocook gave a brief overview of the request.

No one from the public came forward to speak on the matter and Mayor Roberson declared the public hearing closed.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Jabaris Walker, and unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2023-102** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** be adopted.

Mayor Roberson called on Bob Michaud to speak.

Bob Michaud

- Stated he was there in regard to the Oak Ventures property that was going to go on Bethlehem Road which was postponed 2 months ago until today
- He stated it is not showing on the agenda
- Stated there is no transparency in the neighborhood and people are upset about it and would like to know what is going on

Mayor Roberson stated that he cannot speak as to why it is not on the agenda tonight but informed him that the agenda is posted on the website in the appropriate amount of time so people can view what is on the agenda and what is not. He explained that it is required that adequate notice be given and he knows that the City staff complies with those regulations. He apologized for him coming in tonight for something that is not on the agenda.

Bob Michaud

- Asked if there was a Planning Board Meeting the following night and if residents in his community should attend

JoSeth Bocook, Interim Director of Development Services stated that the referenced rezoning request was withdrawn by the applicant and that is the reason no public hearing will be conducted tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, by consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.



Kim Batts
City Clerk