

MONDAY – 5:30 P.M.

JANUARY 24, 2011

WORK SESSION

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City held its first work session of 2011 on the above date and time in the City Council Chambers of the Municipal Administration Building with Mayor R. A. McLean presiding. Those council members attending were: J. M. Baker, M. E. Brooks, L. Hill-Lawrence, L. A. Hummer, R. E. King, B. S. Meggs, J. A. Stimatz and J. B. Walton. City staff attending was: City Manager R. C. Olson, City Clerk D. S. Pierce-Tamplen, City Attorney W. H. Morgan, Deputy Clerk V. D. White, Planning Director J. C. Brooks, Public Utilities Director P. A. Fredette, Electric Director K. F. Clow, Lieutenant J. Lacombe, Finance Director S. E. Blanchard and Human Resource Director K. W. Felton.

Mayor McLean established a quorum was present and opened the meeting. He welcomed those attending and called upon Councilwoman Betty Meggs for the invocation after which he led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

1} APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Mayor McLean called for the approval of the prepared agenda.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem L. A. Hummer, seconded by Councilwoman J. M. Baker to approve the agenda as presented. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Hummer, Baker, Brooks, Hill-Lawrence, King, Meggs, Stimatz and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

2} CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS:

Mayor McLean called upon Public Utilities Director P. A. Fredette for comments.

Mr. Fredette stated that Council had asked for a list and prioritization of Capital Projects from Staff. Staff has complied and is presenting a list that includes only capital projects for the utility and streets infrastructure. There are thirty-five projects listed that have a total estimated price tag of \$35,240,000. When composing the list they weighted three criteria. They were: funding availability, health and welfare requirements/benefits and the extent that the project was in line with community goals and objectives. To do this presented some unexpected challenges and brought to light the need for us to develop a strategy and a system to adopt a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan on an annual

basis. He presented a draft document that defined a CIP, spoke to the need for a CIP, outlined the content of a CIP and provided a process for us to follow in the adoption of a CIP. Another need presented was the need for a documented financial plan that would define a strategy to provide the financial resources to fund a formally adopted CIP. The financial plan would use a combination of funding sources such as budget appropriations, rate adjustments, borrowing and grants to set a basic objective of the taxpayer. The second objective of a financial plan for capital improvements is to discourage the city staff and Council from balancing the annual operating budget at the expense of capital improvement funds. He then went over the needs of the City's infrastructures as requested by Council and set the table to continue the process of formalizing the development and adoption of an annual CIP. Fredette then went over the list and answered questions from members of Council.

3} FIXED AREA NETWORK:

Mayor McLean called upon City Manager R. C. Olson for comments.

Mr. Olson advised that in 1995, Council began installing radio-read electric meters, which employ a device called ERT (electronic read technology). The ERT is integrated into the meter and sends a radio frequency signal which can be picked up and read by a receiver. The City's existing meter reading system employs a reading device, which is remote. The readings are then downloaded into the City's existing software utility billing system. To date, we have all but 68 residential electric meters converted and 200 commercial meters. The electric meters we presently have installed are an AMR device which means they only allow one-way communication from the home to a receiver device. Technology has advanced and now allows two-way communication. These meters are called AMI meters. They will allow you to read from a remote location and also turn meters on or off without sending a person to perform that function. The AMI meters can be turned off and on from City Hall. We are negotiating with our meter supply company to exchange all existing AMR meters currently in stock to AMI meters. In 2006, we started to convert our water meters to AMR meters. We have 1,423 residential meters with 50 ERT installed. Due to the environment where the water meters are located the 50 ERTs lack a strong enough signal to be read by a fixed area network. To date, the City has about 37% of our meters installed with AMR meters. We have 4,000 meters, which need to be converted to AMI meters and 1,423 that will need their 50 ERTs upgraded to 100 ERTs. In addition, 998 various sized commercial meters need to be upgraded. The total cost to convert all our water meters to AMI meters is \$989,206. Once all the water and electric meters have been converted to either an AMR or AMI meter reading system, the City can then benefit from the installation of a fixed area network (FAN). The FAN is comparable to our existing radio system. The FAN has the ability to collect hourly interval meter data, which will allow real time bill

reconciliation, customized meter read days for our customers, assist with peak load management and outage detection and aid in distribution design. The cost to install the FAN is estimated to be \$398,070. In addition, there is a \$7,860 annual maintenance fee. The total cost to upgrade to an AMI meter reading system is estimated to be \$1,698,286. Included in this estimated is the purchase of 500 AMI meters which would allow remote disconnect/reconnect from City Hall. A policy would need to be developed to determine what criteria would be used to install an AMI meter on a customer's home. The City does not have adequate funds available to pay for the upgrade to our meter reading system out of our cash balance. We would need to issue debt to pay for the system. To pay for the new debt payment, staff has looked at reducing employees due to the new FAN installation, along with the City's existing financial commitment to upgrade our water meters. He believes we would be able to eliminate two meter reading positions, along with all the expenses associated with those positions. Over a 10-year period the net savings would be \$1,082,957 in personnel costs in addition to \$254,941 in support costs. He then went over the pros and cons of installing this technology. He answered questions and concerns that various members of Council had. He advised that he will be incorporating this item into the 2011-2012 budget.

4} TAXICAB APPEAL:

Mayor McLean called upon Lt. J. Lacombe for comments.

Lt. Lacombe stated that on January 7, 2011, the Office of Taxicab Inspector reviewed the taxicab drive application received from Mr. Gene D. Harney. After review of Mr. Harney's computerized criminal history; his application was rejected based upon multiple misdemeanor and felony convictions. Pursuant to Article I. Section 86 (Taxicabs), conviction of a "felony or misdemeanor carrying a penalty of at least two years in prison" is grounds in which to revoke a permit to drive, business license, or vehicle for hire permit. Mr. Harney was notified in writing of the rejection and he requested a formal appeal hearing. It was noted that staff recommends that the City Council uphold the revocation of Mr. Gene D. Harney's application to drive a taxicab and that his appeal be denied.

Mr. Harney addressed the City Council requesting that he be given a second chance. He gave a summary regarding his last conviction of communicating threats. He is respectfully requesting that Council grant him his license to drive a cab in order to help support his family of seven children.

A motion was made by Councilwoman J. M. Baker that we deny the appeal and she wishes Mr. Harney good luck and maybe a community next to us doesn't have an ordinance. Councilman J. A. Stimatz seconded the motion.

Councilman J. B. Walton asked to make a friendly amendment.

To table this item and let the officer get additional information regarding his last conviction of communicating threats.

Since there were several concerns expressed by the maker of the original motion, Councilman Walton stated he would make a motion to table this item.

A motion was made by Councilman J. B. Walton, seconded by Councilman M. E. Brooks to table action on this item allowing the officer to obtain additional information regarding the last conviction.

Councilman Brooks stated that he would like to see a transcript of the last conviction. If he is telling the truth he is not going to hold him in bondage for something that happened 20 years ago.

Those voting in favor of motion were: Walton, Brooks, Hill-Lawrence, Hummer, King, Meggs and Walton. Against: Baker. Motion carried.

5} ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, Mayor McLean entertained a motion to adjourn.

A motion was made by Councilwoman B. S. Meggs, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem L. A. Hummer to adjourn. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Meggs, Hummer, Baker, Brooks, Hill-Lawrence, King, Stimatz and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

Mayor McLean adjourned the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Dianne S. Pierce-Tamplen, MMC
City Clerk

Roger A. McLean
Mayor