

**City-County Special Joint Session
November 1, 2022**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City and the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met in special joint session on Tuesday, November 1, 2022 in the EC-PC Senior Center, located at 215 South Water Street, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Kirk Rivers (*Arrived at 6:02 p.m.*)
CITY Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence
Councilman Johnson Biggs
Councilman Joseph Peel
Councilman Javis Gibbs
Councilwoman Katherine Felton
Councilwoman Barbara Baxter
Councilman Johnnie Walton

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilwoman Rose Whitehurst
CITY

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Lloyd Griffin, III
COUNTY Vice-Chairman Charles Jordan
Commissioner Jonathan Meads
Commissioner Cecil Perry
Commissioner Barry Overman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Sean Lavin
COUNTY

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Montre' Freeman
County Manager Sparty Hammett
Assistant County Manager John Shannon
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark
Community Development Director Kellen Long
ECDI Director Debbie Malenfant
IT Director Matthew Simpson
IT Systems Analyst Pedro Holley II
Deputy County Clerk Shatoria Reid
City Clerk April Onley

The special joint City-County Council regular session was called to order by County Chairman Lloyd Griffin and Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Spence provided the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Statement from Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners Chairman Lloyd Griffin III:

Chairman Griffin welcomed everyone to the Senior Center, and thanked School Board Members Virginia Houston and Daniel Spence for joining the meeting this evening, as well as Montre' Freeman, the City's new manager.

2. Statement from City of Elizabeth City Mayor Kirk Rivers:

Mayor Rivers greeted both bodies and said he was always glad when the boards could join together. He praised the elected officials for being able to work together and mentioned the "five points" of Elizabeth City that serve to make our area attractive.

3. Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools Update – Superintendent, Dr. Keith Parker and Students:

Dr. Parker thanked the Board of Education members and students and their families for joining the meeting this evening. He thanked the bodies for their support of the public schools. He said that he was a person who believes that our schools are a national treasure and one of the best things about our country. Many of us would not be where we are today without the public school system. He said he was here because of public schools and we needed to put everything we could into our schools. Our young people have bold thoughts and feelings about their futures and we want to support them in their visions. He shared that we have made a lot of progress

on school buses. He was thankful for the people who have stepped up and are driving buses for us. We have approximately 3,300 students riding buses daily. We have 50 drivers right now. We have more students who utilize a school bus in our school system than many of our neighbors. We have been able to get every child that signed up to ride a bus at the beginning of the year on a bus. We've added new routes as well. Enrollment has also increased. We have new students enrolled in our schools, including in the past few weeks. Our goal is to move toward 5,000 students and we've seen a significant increase.

Dr. Parker shared that they received a \$300,000 grant notification yesterday to add more school resource officers. He shared that two schools, Sheep Harney Elementary and Elizabeth City Middle School had exceeded growth. When teachers and schools exceed growth, it doesn't mean that the teachers and students just show up; it means that they are out-performing their curriculum and the schools in our region. EC Middle had the highest growth index of any school in our region. If kids continue to exceed that growth, they will have higher percentages of passing on tests and then learn into the next year's curriculum as well. He noted that every school is not exceeding growth, so we want to try to make sure that every school does. Every student deserves to go to a school that's exceeding growth, regardless of where they live. They are making priorities to look at capital improvement and maintenance projects. Additionally, over the summer, they'll be putting a lot of energy into landscaping and beautification.

Dr. Parker recognized Katina Waples, the principal of Sheep Harney Elementary for her remarks, and noted that she was named by her peers as our 2022-2023 principal of the year for our school system and will go on to compete in the regional. Mrs. Waples said being chosen was an honor because she was also chosen in 2017-2018. She thanked the bodies for everything they do for our students. She thanked Councilman Gibbs and Mayor Rivers in particular for showing up on the first day of school and supporting their students. Sheep Harney has the highest poverty rate and the highest rate of second-language students, but they work hard to keep students as their number one priority. They have students and parents who show up every day ready to learn and that couldn't happen without county and city support. She was proud to share that they've exceeded growth six years in math in one calendar year and two years in reading in one calendar year.

Dr. Parker stated there were several students from the ECPPS school system present who'd like to share some of their experiences and insights with the boards.

Hollie Weiss, a senior at Pasquotank County High School said she'd had many positive experiences at PCHS and plans on becoming a lawyer in the future. She credited much of her success to Marquita Williams, who'd been her DECA advisor and an extremely impactful teacher for helping her to grow as a student and human being. She'd helped her with her public speaking and learning about collaboration.

Tyon Turner, a junior at Pasquotank County High School said he wanted to pursue an aviation degree at ECSU after graduation. He was taking CTE classes at ECPPS, which challenged him to come up with solutions to real world problems. He shared that he believed PCHS is the best school he's ever been a part of, and credited it with helping him get back on track after he moved from Durham.

Gracie Wooten, a senior at Northeastern High School shared that she was motivated by the idea of setting and achieving goals and by helping and seeing others succeed. Her future plans are to become a nurse. Right now, she has been accepted to three colleges, but will likely stay at COA for the time being as she wants more community involvement. Her favorite teacher at NHS was Erin Grey, her math teacher for the last three years. She stated that she'd had positive experiences in the ECPPS community and felt that students, administration and teachers all know everyone on a personal level.

Eric Williams, a third grader at P.W. Moore said he felt his school was a nice place to learn and believes it's the best school. He said when he grows up, he'd like to be a police officer.

Dr. Parker thanked the student presenters for having the courage to come out and speak. He reiterated that public schools are a national treasure, but we need to change the fact that they're not working for every single kid. We can do more to prepare kids for the next century so they have what they need to be successful. We have bright, talented young people in our school system and that is encouraging.

4. Hospital Update – Sentara Director, Facilities and Plant Operations, Beth Delaney and SAMC President, Dr. Phil Jackson:

Ms. Delaney advised that the entire campus of the new Sentara facility on Halstead Extended is about 135 acres, with the medical offices measuring 83,000 square feet and the hospital itself measuring 235,000 square feet. Construction starts on the hospital later this month. The medical office building is what's currently being constructed. The hospital itself will have 88 beds. The medical office building will have three phases; the first phase will begin this spring with radiology and imaging. In the fall, they'll move on to women's imaging and central testing. In winter of 2024, the hospital will open, and pediatrics, women's OBGYN and others will move in. She reminded everyone that the original hospital groundbreaking was back in July. There will be 10 ICU beds. They are being very flexible with their space. A three-acre parcel is set aside for Pasquotank County EMS. Year to date, they have worked through \$775,000 in grants and are not yet done for the year. The next grant cycle opens early next year and information can be found on their website for anyone who might be interested.

Dr. Jackson said he's excited about the new medical office building, which is expected to be operational in 2023. He thanked the boards for allowing them to present this evening.

5. Parks and Recreation Project Update – Northern / Newland Park – County Manager, Sparty Hammett:

Manager Hammett noted that there had been discussion about adding a northern park for many years. They'd created a Parks and Recreation master plan, which also expressed a need for a northern park. Newland-area citizens attended several board meetings and presented a petition with about 300 names requesting a northern park. With assistance of former Parks and Recreation Director Dexter Harris, they'd identified some potential parcels in the area. They found it was difficult to get a parcel because many of them had been in families for years and they did not want to let go of them. Eventually, they'd settled on the former tractor pull property located at Millpond Road and US-158, which was comprised of about 52 acres in total. On January 11, 2021, the board approved an offer to purchase the property, contingent on receiving PARTF funds to help with the purchase. The board did receive a PARTF grant and the sale closed. Three successful grant applications were submitted by the City's Grants Manager, Jon Hawley on behalf of the County. The PARTF grant was submitted in April of 2022. A positive community meeting on the potential park was held in Newland and had more than 65 attendees. Each attendee was allowed a certain number of "orange dots" and they were asked to prioritize their ideal elements for the park, which included things like walking trails, play equipment, basketball courts, etc. Some components in Phase 1 had to be removed due to rising construction costs, but they still included all of the elements that were identified. In total, we will receive \$463,000 in grant funding towards the \$588,000 total cost of the property purchase. Some of the largest purchases are the sidewalks and trails, park structures, grading and erosion control. The probable total budget is slightly over \$2 million. Per the terms of the budget, capital costs will be the responsibility of the County, so the County will be responsible for about \$1.7 million. In terms of equipment, about \$170,000 of that will be the responsibility of the County. As for operational costs, it will be about two to three years before the park comes online, and it will be split 55/45 County/City.

Mayor Pro Tem Spence said he grew up in Newland on Millpond Road where the tractor pull is located. He asked if the community mentioned the name of General Hawthorne Proctor? Manager Hammett said they did not, but someone did say, "Let's name it Newland Park" and everyone seemed agreeable to that. He noted that everyone present at the meeting had raised their hand in consensus on the name.

Commissioner Perry said he received a lot of calls about the name. There are people out there that thought it should be named after General Proctor as he was the only person from NC that was a master general in the Army and a part of that community. He thought it would be something that we would have a chance to talk about before it was named. He didn't realize that someone had already named it. He worried that sometimes when we named things in the county, we overlook people. We need to think about things before we do them because we need to move forward with inclusion.

Chairman Griffin stated that during their next board meeting they can discuss the naming policy that's been in the works for the last several months, so that will be considered at that time.

Commissioner Perry said he accepted that but still wanted to say what he wanted to say.

Councilman Walton said he thought it was important. He felt there was no need to have meetings if you don't discuss things. He worried that it sometimes becomes difficult after a name has been put on something to try to rename it or change it after the fact. Why can't we name it something now and let the difficulties come in the future if it happens? He pointed out

that Councilman Spence had shared that he's from that community. He said he also knew Mr. Proctor. He believed that he was a sound citizen and he'd done something no one else in this area had done. He opined if they did not take the naming into consideration, they'd doing something contrary to the interest of that community. He said he knew that local personalities are part of the equation. Newland is significant. We can do this before we name something one way and then want to rename it something else 10 years later. He opined that we're doing disservice to our leadership. We should be about making things right and being inclusive, which meant that we should include everybody.

Chairman Griffin directed the attention of the boards to the next item.

Councilman Walton called for point of order.

Chairman Griffin stated that the councilor had a chance to speak at length.

Mayor Rivers suggested that he be allowed to finish his comment.

Councilman Walton said that people didn't think it was a big deal when they renamed Gosnold Park the Johnnie B. Walton Park, but it was a big deal because he was the greatest. He noted that he was not saying he was better than anyone else, but nobody is better than him. When you make yourself feel good, that's what it's all about. By making yourself feel good, you make everyone else feel good. He believed that Hawthorne Proctor deserved more than just seeing his name in the TDA every now and then. He said that it's uncomfortable to make sacrifices, but if you're not uncomfortable, you don't need to be in this field. The only way things change is you're uncomfortable.

6. Parks and Recreation Project Update – Former Elizabeth City Middle School Gymnasium – Parks and Recreation Director, Sean Clark;

Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark provided an update on the former Elizabeth City Middle School gymnasium project. He said that some of the major components in the lease include demolition of the locker rooms and the existing roof. They will come back with installation of the heating and air and painting. The lease does not include construction of access to the gym, so we'll have to get those numbers together and present them to the Parks and Rec Board and then bring them before the County and City. He noted that this will be for the 2023-2024 budget. The lobby and front office work is expected to cost about \$15,000. The multipurpose room and kitchen will be in the facility, and will cost roughly about \$16,000. The conference room, bathroom and locker rooms will be outfitted. The gymnasium itself is being estimated at about \$13,000. Fitness equipment was acquired several years ago and some will be moved into this location. We will need to put matting onto the floor and install TVs and TV mounts. Office setups will need to be put in for staff. Altogether, there's about \$55,000 needed to get started and moving forward on the facility. Parks and Recreation will eventually require two full-time activity specialists, several part-time supports, a lead office assistant, and a custodian to man this facility. The annual operating costs are estimated at about \$458,000, beginning in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Mayor Rivers asked Director Clark to explain the breakdown on the percentages and costs on how the budget of Parks and Recreation worked. Director Clark explained that the annual money for Parks and Recreation is broken down between the County and the City; 55% comes from the County and 45% comes from the City for operating costs. Mayor Rivers asked if that only applied to operational costs. Director Clark said there's also a leasing payment estimate that works in the same manner and it's for six years. Mayor Rivers asked if it becomes a purchase on the sixth year. Director Clark confirmed that it did, and a 50/50 split.

Councilman Biggs asked what's the amount of the purchase? Manager Hammett said it's a lease purchase so all the lease payments go toward the purchase. He believed it to be \$1.6 million. In year seven, we have the opportunity to purchase after they clear the credits associated with it. He noted that it has to be held for that period of time for the historic tax credits.

7. Adjournment:

There being no further business to be discussed, both Chairman Griffin and Mayor Rivers adjourned the joint meeting at 7:08 p.m.

E. Kirk Rivers
Mayor

April D. Onley, NCCMC
City Clerk

