City Council Budget Work Session
April 21, 2025

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in Budget Work Session on Monday, April 21, 2025 in Council Chambers, located on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Administration Building, 306 E. Colonial Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Kirk Rivers *(Arrived at 5:38 p.m.)*
Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence
Councilman Johnson Biggs
Councilman Joseph Peel *(Arrived at 5:33 p.m.)*
Councilwoman Rose Whitehurst
Councilman Ronnie Morris
Councilman Johnnie Walton

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilwoman Javis Gibbs
Councilwoman Katherine Felton

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Reginald Goodson
Chief of Staff Monica Cole
Interim Finance Director Brian Lewis
Interim Chief of Police James Avens
Electric Superintendent Donnell White
Human Resources Director Aresta Johnson
Public Utilities Director Dwan Bell
Interim Parks and Recreation Director Stacy Williams
Fire Chief Chris Carver
ECDI Director Debbie Malenfant
IT Director Matthew Simpson
IT Systems Analyst Pedro Holley II
City Clerk April Onley

Mayor Pro Tem Spence called the Budget Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m. Councilwoman Whitehurst provided the invocation, after which Councilman Biggs led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. **Presentation / Discussion – General Fund FY 2025-2026:**

Manager Goodson advised that the budget team would be presenting the General Fund for FY 2025-2026 in detail this evening. As the current budget is balanced, any changes will be made in real-time. If additions are requested, cuts will be required as well.

Interim Director Brian Lewis directed the Council's attention to a handout on the dais, which detailed changes to the budget.

Councilman Biggs asked if it would be possible to review the revenues first. Mayor Pro Tem Spence inquired if that would be agreeable with the Council; and it was.

Interim Director Lewis advised that revenues were located toward the back of the budget books, beginning on page 230. On page 231, Municipal Tax Revenues begin and page 232 lists Property Taxes. Property taxes are the largest part of the revenue for the General Fund. We are currently at $8.4 million and we have one quarter left to collect. He expected those payments to start coming in within the next week or so. We are projected to end up around $9.38 million or $9.39 million, which is the same amount expected for next year. We have to calculate based on the prior year's audited financials.

Councilman Biggs asked if the County gives any indication of what they are basing their tax revenue off for the City's portion, especially considering new growth. With the amount of new homes being constructed, do we have any number we forecast with for those? Director Lewis replied that the City gets tax levy each year. We are at about $1.68 billion right now. We work based off that levy, which is where that number comes from.

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Manager Goodson added that the Chief Building Inspector sends a report to the County Manager about everything being built in the City on a monthly basis.

Councilman Biggs expected the number would be higher considering the increased construction. Manager Goodson said they had a several meetings with the Building Inspectors to determine what they believed would come online and when. The number in the budget may be a little conservative. We could probably raise it some, but budgeting conservatively has benefitted us over the last few years because it allowed us to put more money into the fund balance.

Director Lewis explained that another part of property taxes comes from DMV taxes, which are hard to estimate. The tariff situation has increased that difficulty. Due to uncertainty, they kept the estimate close to where it was at $900,000. We also have a little bit that comes in on delinquent fees under those taxes too.

The next revenue source is sales tax. Sales tax carries over through page 244 on electricity, pipe natural gas, telecommunications and programming. It has been steadily climbing over the years, so that number has increased.

Page 245 lists the local option sales tax. This has seen an increase due to more commercial properties in the area. As Elizabeth City continues to grow, we can expect to have a steady increase in that revenue stream.

Director Lewis pointed out that the Powell Bill funding has also been increasing. Several years ago, the City's disbursement was about $500,000 and now we receive more than $600,000.

Another source of revenue comes in the form of collections for recreation fees. The City receives a portion from the County as Parks and Recreation partners, which applies to the Senior Center as well.

Other funding from the County we can expect is Fire Protection, which is usually a set contracted amount. We are getting about $448,000 annually for that service.

Director Lewis said there are other smaller revenues here and there, but the aforementioned items are the largest revenue impacts within the General Fund.

Director Lewis directed the Council to the individual departments within the General Fund, beginning with Legislative. The largest increase within the Legislative budget is the inclusion of the $300 Christmas bonus for members of the City Council and Mayor. Another increase accounts for the replacement of the executive chairs at the dais, which are in poor shape and very old. The funds set aside for ward meetings will not be in the budget this year because it is an election year, so that money ($3,500) will go to the inauguration.

Councilman Biggs was surprised it the election only cost $3,500. Director Lewis clarified that those funds were only for the inauguration. The funding for the election itself is significantly more expensive, but it will appear in the Non-Departmental line.

Councilman Biggs saw that in 2022, inauguration costs totaled $1,700, and 2024 was not reporting yet. He felt they could put $2,000 toward the inauguration and then have the remaining $1,500 for ward meetings. Mayor Pro Tem Spence agreed since the budget was already balanced. Mayor Rivers concurred that whatever remained after the inauguration could be divided amongst the wards. It is good to have something in there if the councilors want to hold a ward meeting. We will leave it at the $3,500.

Director Lewis moved to Administration. For FY 2025-2026 there is an $85,000 increase for a budget of $671,000, which includes previous modifications to salaries and benefits that occurred for the Manager, Chief of Staff, and so on.

For Finance, there is a proposed budget of $1.26 million, which is an increase of $107,000. This budget reflects the new position of Senior Accountant. There is a lowered audit expense because we are finally caught up and will only have to pay for one audit in this fiscal year.

Councilman Peel asked if the City was still using the services of Susan Tezai. Director Lewis confirmed that she was. Mrs. Tezai is listed under the Financial Consultant line.

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Councilman Biggs asked if they were proposing to spend another almost $200,000 on those services this year. Director Lewis explained that total was putting Mrs. Tezai in the budget at the same rate she's had since she's been contracted. Councilman Biggs was concerned that the financial consultant was supposed to be a short-term solution. We are now going into the third year on this. At some point in time, we have to do something with that. It is a hefty salary and we are now trying to add another in-house position on top of it. That accounts to a 1.5% pay raise across the General Fund.

Mayor Pro Tem Spence opined that the money was only a reflection of things right now. He did not think that once a full-time Finance Director was hired Mrs. Tezai would be used as much or as long, so that number would decrease. He felt the number was just a projection since we only have an interim. Once we are settled, it will likely be different. Mrs. Tezai has been very effective helping us get away from being so far behind. It was costly to have her here but it was beneficial. Some things are necessary. If she wasn't here, where would we be?

Councilman Biggs said he was not arguing the about point that the City needed her because they did, he was only asking about the future.

Councilman Peel inquired if the amount listed in the budget was a guaranteed salary or was it considered an "up to" amount. Do we tell her when to come in or when we need her to work on something? Is she on standby or do we tell her what to do?

Manager Goodson stated that several years ago, numerous long-term members of the Finance Division left. The City lost a significant amount of historical knowledge when that happened. Susan is an expert in her field and part of her job is training. We do not think our staff is in a place where we can let them go on their own just yet. They are just not at that level yet. They have improved but they still need more training.

Councilman Peel agreed that it was not the time to let Susan go. He just wanted to know what her contracted looked like. Do we control her time here or does she control it? Is she guaranteed the amount of money that's in the budget? Director Lewis replied that Susan is paid by the hour. Councilman Peel noted that meant the budget number was really an "up to" amount then. Manager Goodson added that he had been told she also doesn't charge the City for all the hours she works either. Councilman Peel confirmed that she doesn't, and she's saved us a lot.

Mayor Rivers asked if Director Lewis could explain the new Senior Accountant position. Director Lewis relayed that the Senior Accountant position was created in the previous fiscal year, but it was after the budget's adoption. It was meant to be a position that would take on much of what the bookkeepers worked on with bank recons and fixed assets. It is a position that is already in place, but because of when it was created it was not included in the budget before now. Mayor Rivers asked if this is the position that the former Finance Director filled. Director Lewis confirmed that was correct.

Councilman Biggs asked if they had budgeted as if the Finance Department was fully staffed with a Finance Director and everything. Manager Goodson confirmed that they had. Councilman Biggs asked if the Finance Director's position had been reposted to solicit applications. Chief of Staff Cole replied that it had.

Councilman Biggs wondered if they should budget for a bond attorney. He knew it may not come through in this period, but they might need a placeholder. Director Lewis pointed out that the bond attorney is not paid unless there is an issuance of funds. They may even be able to pay the bond attorney from the funds issued, which would just require an amendment.

In Code Enforcement, the budget is proposed as $406,000, which is a $51,000 increase. In 2024, a new position was created in Code Enforcement, which was the Minimum Housing Inspector. The increase in coming from the Demolition line.

Mayor Rivers reminded everyone that the Council determined that surplus sales could go into the Demolition line to create additional funding when needed. Manager Goodson asked what the Council wanted the total budget for Demolition to be at this time. Councilman Biggs asked if they should set a baseline. Should we budget something like $75,000 and then anything we sell is added to the fund as extra padding? He was under the impression that is how they intended to do it when it was first discussed. Mayor Pro

Tem Spence said that's what he thought too, but he guaranteed even if they went up to $100,000, they would still need more. Putting extra there, adding surplus sales funds to it, we could clear up some of these blighted homes. Mayor Rivers suggested keeping the same amount as appropriated last year, which was $45,000, and then adding whatever is received through sales onto it. He noted there was a current upset bid sale running for $40,000. Mayor Pro Tem Spence did not feel comfortable operating on "maybes" and "mights". The budget is balanced at $75,000, and he believed the amount should remain as it stood.

Manager Goodson noted that Inspector Henry discovered the abatement costs are driving the demolitions up so $45,000 will probably only cover demolition for three homes.

Councilman Biggs suggested the line remain at $75,000. Maybe quarterly we can assess our sales and do an increase into the line to realize it.

Director Lewis moved on to Development Services, which reflected an increase of $215,000. The Land Use Plan accounts for the largest part of the increase.

Councilman Biggs noted that the Salaries and Wages line jumped up from the amount budgeted the previous year. What was the driver behind the increase? Director Lewis replied that they are funding the Senior Planner position, which was not funded last year. If we fund the Senior Planner, the current part-time position will go away.

Next was Public Buildings, which had an increase of $383,000. The biggest component in the increase is upgrades to first floor of the Gardner Municipal Building for Customer Service. There are changes proposed to optimize service delivery and reduce waste of space. There will also be additional office space added to the AP Midgett Building.

Mayor Pro Tem Spence remembered an earlier discussion about having a call center in Customer Service and asked if that was still proposed. Director Lewis believed that would likely be part of the changes for Customer Service; however, that would be included in the Customer Service budget. The piece included in Public Buildings was more oriented on safety, call buttons and other security measures.

Councilman Walton noted that there was an office downstairs being rented to a government representative. Is that still happening? Are there changes being made to that office? Director Lewis replied that no changes were being made to the office. Councilman Walton stated that he had not been aware of the rental until recently. He asked how much the City was receiving for the rental. Director Lewis advised that there was not a fee associated with use of the office. Councilman Walton inquired how someone could rent something for nothing. Mayor Rivers stated that the Council voted upon the rental some time ago. Councilman Walton felt that decisions such as those should come to the Council before they happen. We should not do business like that. He asked to know the date the rental was approved.

Mayor Pro Tem Spence pointed out that staff at the A.P. Midgett Building have to process quite a bit of money too. Shouldn't they have the same call buttons and things like that? Director Lewis agreed that they should. Mayor Pro Tem Spence said those employees also needed safety measures in place in case something happens. He noted that his wife worked over there and he wanted to ensure she was protected. Director Lewis assured him that there would be security measures installed in the A.P. Midgett Building as well.

Councilman Peel inquired about the LED sign. Director Lewis explained that would be used to display things like meeting dates, closings, updates, and other messages that need to go out to the citizens. Director Goodson pointed out that when our offices are closed, we are just printing something and taping it to the window right now. People hardly ever see them. This would be an LED sign on the first floor to provide public announcements. Mayor Pro Tem Spence said he was personally in favor of something like that because the City cannot continue to stay behind forever. He believed there might be a sign available for a bit cheaper, but he did not want it removed from the budget. Mr. Goodson advised that this item was part of the suggested capital projects. The City had two good years just growing the fund balance. These are the capital projects staff has identified that we need. The Council can remove them and continue to allow the fund balance simply to grow, but each of the items are needed.

Councilman Peel explained that he'd only tagged the sign because he was surprised by the price. He wondered if it would be worthwhile to talk to the County, TDA or ECDI and see if there is interest in pooling some money into putting a sign on Ehringhaus, Water Street or somewhere else that would be a good place to advertise many of the things going on.

Councilman Biggs shared that the past Friday, many people in his neighborhood had their garbage cans curbside for pickup, but there was no solid waste running that day due to the holiday. He wondered if it would be beneficial to invest it in some type of mobile app that notified people of things like that instead of a sign.

Director Lewis noted that a mobile app is a reoccurring expense; however, an LED sign is a one-time purchase. Chief of Staff Cole advised that the City is in the process of getting a mobile app. Staff has been receiving training in preparation for the launch in a few months. Councilman Biggs felt that $50,000 was expensive for a sign.

Councilman Morris believed that the City needed to invest in the sign. In his travels, he noticed that the schools had signs like this and it provides a great display for when they are open or closed or have events going on. He did not think $50,000 was a terrible price, though he did feel it should be installed somewhere with more visibility.

Councilman Walton opined that they should try to do more than just grow the General Fund at this point. He noted that was why he previously questioned why the City put the ARPA money into the General Fund. That just tried to make it look like we had money. That money should be spent on things that are needed. Whom are we trying to impress? We have to use the money to serve the people we were put in place to serve.

Councilwoman Whitehurst asked if they were saying the City does have a mobile app that can issue text message notifications. Chief of Staff Cole replied that we do, and it will go live on July 1st. IT Director Simpson explained that each department would have their own push notifications through the mobile app. We are working on the app now and it will be available in the next few months. Citizens will have to register to say they would like to get our notifications, but it will be quick and easy to do. Councilwoman Whitehurst asked if the messages would arrive via test. Director Simpson confirmed that they would.

Councilwoman Whitehurst believed that communication was key and an area the City needed to improve. She was in favor of both the LED sign and the mobile app. Mayor Rivers stated that it sounded like the sign would stay in the budget based on what he was hearing from the Council. He pointed out that the City owned a lot on the corner of Water Street that has a lot of traffic. We could install a bigger sign like the one the school system has. We will leave it in the budget and have staff check into some options.

Mayor Pro Tem agreed that it made sense to see if any other entities wanted to get involved. We still have the funds in there one way or another. Councilman Peel said that during events, sometimes half the town ends up being closed down, but there won't be a sign anywhere. With the Bassmaster event, we had many streets closed down and it would have been great to let people know. It would be the advantage of many groups.

Councilwoman Whitehurst asked how our citizens would be informed about the mobile app. Director Lewis said there would be a few ways, but they intended to put information about it on the utility bills when they go out. Director Simpson stated that there would be a kick-off meeting for the My Civic app and the PSSA Plus app, which is another upcoming application that will give customers notifications from their water and electric meters. They will be able to pay utility bills, view real-time usage and various other things right in the app.

Mayor Rivers asked if the $80,000 was for ballistic glass. Director Lewis replied that it was, and it was for the Customer Service Department. We have had some very rowdy situations and our reps need to be protected.

Councilwoman Whitehurst asked if ballistic glass is becoming standard in most cities now. Director Lewis relayed that it had become standard within the last few years. He reminded the Council of the Virginia Beach municipal building incident. Unfortunately, shootings are becoming more commonplace and it is important to be ready and well protected. Manager Goodson pointed out that one of the problems we have in this building is that absolutely anyone can walk in at any time, carrying anything. We have no metal detectors;

you can come in right in with a weapon. This glass is necessary for our employees downstairs unless you want to pursue other safety measures.

Director Lewis directed the Council's attention to the Police Department, which reflected an $8.3 million budget. This budget actually decreased from the previous fiscal year due to several frozen positions. There are several capital requests, including three police vehicles and a van via the Enterprise contract; ballistic glass for the administration staff on the first floor of the Public Safety Building; 11 indoor cameras; a drone and docking station; a KEYper management system; and 10 cameras to be installed throughout the city.

Councilman Biggs asked what the van would be used for. Director Lewis advised that it was for CSI.

Councilman Biggs pointed out that the Council also budgeted for cameras last year. Were those purchased and installed? Interim Chief Avens replied that they have prepared the PO but the cameras have not been installed. Councilman Biggs asked if they had looked into the mobile cameras that go up in the air and give you a 360 view for areas that have a lot of action. Interim Chief Avens explained that the Police Department has rented portable boom cameras for several years for events like the Potato Festival, but they are not something we own ourselves. Councilman Biggs inquired if they might be something the Police Department needs. Chief Avens said they are installing cameras now, and they moved funding several months ago to purchase more, so they should have 31 additional cameras installed by July 1st. This new funding is to replace some of the old cameras and expand coverage.

Councilman Morris asked if most of the cameras were 360s. Chief Avens explained that it varied because it often would depend on what they were trying to capture. There is not always one particular camera to fit each individual thing.

Direction Lewis moved to the Fire Department, which is the second largest department in the General Fund. The Fire Department has a proposed $7.1 million budget with an increase of $2 million for this fiscal year. The increase includes a $1.1 million fire truck, roof repair for Station 1 ($130,000), front ramp replacement ($65,000), and a new generator and air packs. They requested five more personnel for the department, and two of those have made it into the budget. The Rit Pack has made it in as well. Mobile radios are included at a cost of $20,000. Communication equipment for dispatch has been added at $60,000. In addition, a thermal imaging system made it into their budget. They do have some requests for vehicles from the Enterprise contract as well.

Councilman Biggs asked how many vehicles Fire would be getting from Enterprise for $91,000. Chief Carver said it was five. Councilman Peel asked how many vehicles we were estimated to get overall through the contract. Manager Goodson stated that there are 39 within the entire budget.

Councilman Morris saw that we were losing Centurylink and Brightspeed. Are we switching to Fybe? Director Simpson shared that he'd spoken with Fybe representatives earlier that day. They are supposed to be installing our patch cameras. It has been a long time coming. They said they are on order. Once those are installed, it will allow all utility poles to get fiber. The third leg of the project will begin moving around Hughes Boulevard to Trinkaloe Road. He noted that he did call Fybe every week to get a status report and that information had been provided in the latest one. Councilman Morris asked if that would cause an increase or decrease. Director Simpson explained that it would increase connectivity and help change from radio to fiber. Councilman Morris asked about the increased charges being levied by Brightspeed and Centurylink. Director Simpson stated that they were working on getting the Brightspeed bill lowered. We still have some landlines we pay for through them. They are now doing fiber lashing because they inherited all the copper lines through Centurylink. Our goal is to eliminate as many landlines as we can, so we should be able to reduce that billing.

Director Lewis continued his presentation with Fire Inspections, which had a proposed budget of $421,328. Capital items included a Ford Ranger via the Enterprise lease and replacement of several mobile radios.

The Building Inspections budget was proposed at $503,336 with no capital. This budget decreased $33,000 in this year as the Chief Inspector position came in a little lower than expected. Mayor Pro Tem Spence asked how many inspectors the City has. Manager Goodson replied that we have three full-time and one under contract just for the hospital. The hospital project closes out in August.

Councilman Peel noted that was going to be his question as he looked at Contracted Services on page 59. The hospital should be finished by August or September. Manager Goodson advised that they expect to move into the next hospital in August. They had the contracted inspector because that project required a Level 3 Certification. Not every job requires a Level 3, but we have more things coming into the City now that do. Apartment complexes that are three levels and up require a higher level of certification. Some buildings above a certain square footage have to have a Level 3 Inspector. Everything dealing with the hospital required Level 3s. The upcoming apartment complex on Ehringhaus Street must have a Level 3. Level 1 or Level 2 can do small retail, but mostly it is determined by square feet. Burlington Coat Factory is probably over the threshold of Level 1 or Level 2.

Councilman Peel said he was just wondering why the cost for the part-time Level 3 Inspector increased to $14,000. Manager Goodson stated that the City might need him on a part-time basis; however, that number could probably be reduced. Councilman Biggs agreed as we only spent $45,000 last year and the Level 3 Inspector was tied to the hospital on a regular basis.

Director Lewis moved on to Public Utilities Administration, a budget consisting of no capital and purely operational costs. The proposed budget was $192,000, which was an increase of $109,000. The primary item associated with the increase was a site plan for a new Public Utilities facility.

Councilman Biggs asked what the $85,000 plan included. Director Bell explained that it included designs for all the site work. The City owns land at Wellfield and about 12 acres of that has been identified for this site. The plan will have surveys, permitting, CAD drawings and renderings, and it will verify if we can build there. We are looking for a location that we do not have to buy, as far as the land. Councilman Biggs understood the thought process behind the plan, but it was a significant amount of money to have a plan that would be potentially shelved. Should we hold off on that until we find out more about this bond process? He didn't want to be in a situation where we were just cutting an engineer loose on July 1st without anything actionable behind it. If we do not give provide a clear financing plan, then we are wasting money.

Manager Goodson pointed out that a new CIP was coming to the Council as part of the budget process. If that new facility does not make it in Year 1, we probably would not include the plan in the budget. Director Bell mentioned that the Department of Labor performed an inspection of the Public Works facility and the report was awful. We are not ADA complaint anymore. They have written a letter and sent it in. He noted that they were looking at possible funding options with USDA. Councilman Peel asked if he had ever dealt with the USDA before. Director Bell confirmed that he had. Right now, they look like our best option for funding this particular project. A new Public Works facility was also in the old CIP years ago.

Councilman Biggs asked if a dollar figure is in place for a financial consultant around the bond package. Manager Goodson relayed that the financial consultant would be presenting to the Council on April 28th, and he might provide a figure at that point; however, nothing is in the budget yet.

Director Lewis continued on to GIS with a proposed budget of $223,567. The biggest change is from inflation around on operating costs on day-to-day items. There is no capital requested.

Fleet Maintenance has a proposed budget of $544,531, which is a $26,000 increase from the prior year. They are asking for an air compressor and coolant recharge system. Director Bell noted that when staff turns on the current air compressor, all the lights in the building dim.

Streets has a proposed budget of $2 million, which is a $586,000 increase. Capital requests include a new mower to maintain the ditches throughout the city, which will help with flooding. The cost for that is about $200,000. There is also a new street sweeper included at about $329,000.

Director Lewis moved into the Powell Bill section and reminded the Council they recently requested some updates to the proposed street resurfacing. To keep the City on the existing plan, 11 or 12 streets need to be resurfaced each time.

Councilman Biggs said the Council needed to go ahead and amend this section to account for what they did not spend at the last meeting. Director Lewis thought they would be asking to add more streets, so they would have to find out what the new bids were once they came in. If Powell Bill is not spent, it goes into its own fund and can be saved for a year. Director Bell added that they currently follow an official Conditional Pavement Report that had been performed on the streets so he needed to ensure that was followed. He did not want to add a street in a way that would have it jumping over another one that needed resurfacing more. Councilman Biggs thought the Council wanted to package Director Bell's list from last Monday night with the list for this coming year to create a big package to save on mobilization fees. Director Lewis pointed out that they would have to allocate the money in the 2025-2026 budget. They already know what the figure was so they could just increase the number by the amount of the first package. They could essentially double their consideration easily enough.

Director Bell advised that he was also working on the estimates he received last year and getting updated pricing on speed bumps. The vendor also has rubber mats and asphalt tables, so he would be getting quotes for all of that. Mayor Pro Tem Spence believed there was someone local, Mr. Ronnie Heckstall, who could be contacted too. Councilman Peel shared that he'd taken a trip to Hatteras and there are speed bumps leading up the lighthouse that he found to serve their purpose without jarring the vehicle going over them. He felt the Council was going to receive more requests for speed bumps all the time.

Director Lewis suggested that if the Council wanted to double the amount for street resurfacing, he would recommend allocating an even $1 million for 2025-2026. We know we have roughly $600,000 coming in. In July, he would know precisely how much the City closed out with for FY 2025. He felt there would be at least $700,000 available as of July 1st.

Councilman Biggs did not want to delay the process too much because he constantly heard people complaining about the condition of the streets. Mayor Pro Tem Spence asked Director Bell if he contacted the companies that already issued a bid was it possible they would give a better rate for more streets. Director Bell thought that the City resurfaced 18 or so in 2021 and had a better price, so there was a possibility Regardless, it has to be formally rebid. The main issue will be availability. For example, Barnhill always bid every time but they are consumed with other projects outside of a certain window.

Councilman Biggs asked if they should wait until the fall when the money comes in or should they go ahead and try to jump on it now as soon as they know how much they are going to roll over. Director Bell advised that they should move forward now because the weather would be a factor in the fall. Director Lewis suggested that they try to see what they could get for $700,000ish now, and then bid the other in October. We could do $765,000 to have a round number. Director Bell agreed that they could start now with that amount if that's what the Council wanted. Director Lewis asked the Council if they wanted Director Bell to move forward with the bid now. Mayor Pro Tem Spence said he did. Councilman Peel concurred that they should not wait. Director Bell noted that they would need some advertisement money to begin the process again. He would reach out to the companies who bid the first time, but legally they would have to advertise all over again.

Director Lewis moved on to Parks and Recreation with a proposed budget of $4.2 million proposed budget, which was an $848,000 increase. There are 10 tournaments on the books at South Park already. Those tournaments come with increased costs for coverage by part-time employees. The budget includes a comprehensive plan to update Enfield Park (10-year plan), which must be on file in order to receive grants. There are proposed upgrades to the boat ramp, the golf course the pedestrian bridge, the playground at Johnnie Walton Park, and the irrigation system.

Councilman Walton stated that Johnnie Walton Park needed to have the basketball courts painted as well. Director Lewis told him that there was $120,000 allocated for the upgrades, so that would likely be included. Councilman Walton reiterated that whatever other upgrades were made, he would ask that someone please repaint the courts. They do not look good. Interim Director Williams noted that the playground is the oldest one in Parks and Recreation, which is why it is in the budget for replacement. She ensured Councilman Walton that they would work on the basketball court too.

Director Lewis showed a photo of the Weeksville Boardwalk, which needed upgrades as well; however, that is a County-only funded project. Interim Director Williams showed the golf course bridge and explained that is something golfers have to cross when on the course. Unfortunately, they have already had someone fall in due to the state of the bridge. Mayor Rivers asked where things stood in the Year-to-Actual. If there are available funds, that is something that needs to be fixed right now. He did not want those repairs to wait. Interim Director Williams believed there might be enough available in the Salary Savings line for this fiscal year. Mayor Rivers declared that the bridge classified as an emergency. We need to make sure we invest in our parks. We are making sure our employees have been invested in, but these are our parks for our citizens. There is a park in every ward. When things get tight, the Council doesn't think of parks. We should spend some money now to make sure each one has green grass, playground equipment that isn't deteriorating and nice walkways.

Mayor Rivers continued that he was not saying to close the golf course bridge entirely because you have to cross it to get to holes 7, 8 and 9. We just need to get it fixed. He believed staff had an idea to look into the repair now. Mayor Pro Tem Spence felt that the bridge needed to be closed until they could find a contractor to work on it. He was sure they could find someone to jump on it quickly. Interim Director Williams advised that they had already received quotes. Mayor Pro Tem Spence noted that he would not personally walk on it in its condition Councilman Morris asked how much we had been quoted for repair. Interim Director Williams replied that it would be just over $20,000. Councilman Morris asked if that increased the width of the bridge to five feet. Director Williams replied that it did not. She was not certain how wide the bridge is right now. Councilman Peel believed it was about four feet wide. Director Williams pointed out that the new bridge will have rails on it, which this one does not. Councilman Walton suggested that if someone checked it out in the next few days, maybe they could bring an update on Monday when the Council met again.

Director Lewis advised that another item in the Parks and Rec budget is a dog park at Enfield. Interim Director Williams added that they are applying for grant funding for the dog park. Councilman Biggs asked if they end up installing the dog park, they should go ahead and name it after former Councilman Donnelly. He asked about for one every single budget year. Mayor Pro Tem Spence said many people have to go all the way to Currituck for a dog park. The park over there separates the big dogs from the little dogs. Interim Director Williams said this proposal would have the separation as well. Mayor Pro Tem Spence stated that he was in support of that idea.

Mayor Rivers felt that if they did the dog park, he wanted it to something nice. He didn't want a third-rate dog park just for the sake of saying we have one. Let's really have a nice one, the same way we're trying to get all of our parks to A1 status. Councilman Biggs added that if it cost extra to be as maintenance free as possible so staff doesn't have to touch it for a few years, then it will be money well spent.

Councilman Walton stated that the City needed something for the Black males to prevent them from falling in the "gap". We have many organized initiatives in Parks and Rec, but some kids don't like those sports. We need to find something to engage those kids instead of allowing them to get into gangs. They want to belong but they don't want to belong to a team of basketball or football. What do we do to fill that gap? It's a hard question .We have many kids in that 13-19 group and we need to keep their interest.

Interim Director Williams explained that "Recreation" is more than just something that happens on the ballfield or at the Rec Center. We can collaborate with other organizations to take it into the community. Rec needs to go to people that cannot come to Rec. Councilman Walton reiterated that the City needed initiatives somewhere to keep these kids out of the pipeline.

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Mayor Rivers stated that they needed to have different things available for different people. Enfield has a lot of land and they aren't using the softball fields like they used to. Some have been asking for an outdoor fitness center. We need to concentrate on our parks. We could develop a great master plan with amenities that could be good for all kids. They can either use it or not. No one wants to play basketball right now, but in two or three years that might change. The school system has restarted elementary basketball and the suspension rates have dropped.

Councilman Peel said that a school he worked with once got a ropes course and kids went through the course and learned how to work together to get over the obstacles. It really made a significant difference. He thought they may have one in Perquimans County. You need trees for a course like that and Enfield Park may not have enough, but we could find somewhere to put something like that.

Director Lewis reminded the Council that another item appearing in capital for Parks and Rec capital was the five-year equipment lease. There is a lot of equipment that needs to be updated (14 pieces). The front door controls for Knobbs Creek are also proposed, as are several vehicles through the Enterprise program. A security camera system has been included as well.

The Senior Center has a budget $775,777, which is a $125,000 increase. There is an initiative to get more programs out to seniors, so there are increases with part-time staff related to that. There is a senior van included in the Enterprise lease. Mayor Pro Tem Spence asked how much does it cost for seniors to attend the Senior Center. Director Williams replied that it is $20 a year if you are a resident.

Councilman Biggs asked what else was accounting for the increase other than the salaries. Director Lewis replied that many of the increases were related to operating costs. They do have a few staff members that need training and per diem costs went up so we had to account for that. We have more programs and those need materials, so there was an increase there. Contracted Services went up about $8,000. There was about $17,000 for the Enterprise lease program for the van. Most of the cost increase was just part-time salaries, which came out to about $80,000.

Mayor Rivers asked what was happening with the two mini buses the Senior Center has now. Interim Director Williams explained that they still have one and the other one is being replaced with the van. The buses require CDL drivers and they are very hard to find.

Cemeteries also fall under Parks and Recreation. There is not much of an increase as we were able to keep our contractor at the same rate for another year.

Director Lewis highlighted Non-Departmental, which is how we pay retirees. There are a few Business Investment Plans nearing closeout that appear in this line. The Inland Tanglewood Parkway BIP will be falling off after FY 2026, so there will be a decrease. We also pay toward several nonprofits including SOULS and AoA. We also contribute to Hopeline, but that funding comes out of the Police Department.

Councilman Biggs asked if EDC came out of Non-Departmental. Director Lewis stated that about two years ago it was moved elsewhere, Water & Sewer. Mayor Rivers recalled that last year, the request was $55,000. Councilman Biggs thought it was paid out of Electric last year. Director Lewis confirmed that it was in Electric Non-Departmental. It used to be $65,000.

ECDI has a proposed budget of $129,981, reflecting a $7,000 increase. Departmental supplies has increased slightly just because of inflated costs of day-to-day supplies. The ECDI Director would like to attend some professional development so that is included as well.

Councilman Walton said he found out that ECDI is going to use the Verizon building. When did that happen? He felt that was another "ghost thing" he did not know about. Mayor Rivers advised that it had been discussed with the Council about a month ago. Councilman Walton stated that he saved that building from demolition once and he felt that people have overlooked his thoughts and feelings on the matter. He noted that he was just one vote. He believed that the agendas were often going out on Sunday so he didn't have a chance to review them. Mayor Rivers stated that the agendas are posted on Friday. He had never seen an instance of an agenda posting on Sunday, He asked

the Clerk if agendas ever deviated from Friday. The Clerk confirmed that unless Friday was a holiday, in which the agenda would post the day prior, they were always posted on Friday.

Councilman Walton stated that he did not know about ECDI going into the building until he was told about it during a TDA meeting. He rode by the building one day and nothing was in there and then rode by it again a month later and something was in there. Also in that meeting they showed some new development with the waterfront. He asked Director Malenfant if she would bring that information to Monday's meeting for the full Council.

Director Lewis moved on to HR. The largest portion of increase in the HR budget is the Wellness Program ($15,000), which is used to invest back into the employees of the City. These are initiatives for health and wellness.

IT has a proposed budget of $946,034, which is an increase of $213,872. The biggest increases are from capital project items such as fiber installation and card key access panels. Director Simpson pointed out that the $94,000 item is contingent upon getting the treatment for each utility pole from Fybe.

Councilman Biggs noted that there is a new proposed title change and salary for GIS; is that in the wrong place? Director Simpson believed that may have been a typo. GIS was listed already. Manager Goodson confirmed that was entered in error. Staff would provide the Council with those corrected numbers. He reminded the Council that they also changed the program and process where raises are provided to employees. We are now doing that just once a year as part of the budget process. HR created a form for the department heads to use to propose raises for any employees they feel need it and why.

Manager Goodson advised that the General Fund presentation was now concluded and they would be going over the Enterprise Fund in May.

Councilman Peel stated that somewhere he saw the amount of money being pulled from the fund balance was $4.2 million. During the next meeting, he would like to know how much of that is recurring. Manager Goodson replied that none of it was recurring. In order to use fund balance, the project or item had to be a one-time thing.

2. <u>Adjournment:</u>

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Rivers adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

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E. Kirk Rivers
Mayor

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April D. Onley
City Clerk, NCCMC

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