

**City Council Regular Session
Organizational Meeting
December 11, 2023**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in the organizational portion of its regular session on Monday, December 11, 2023 in Mid-Atlantic Christian University's Blanton Center, located at 715 North Poindexter Street, Elizabeth City, NC. This meeting was the first meeting of the newly elected members of the City Council following the October 2023 municipal election. Prior to the meeting being convened, The Honorable Eula Reid, Emergency Superior Court Judge administered the oath of office to the mayor and members of the City Council.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Kirk Rivers
Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence
Councilman Johnson Biggs
Councilman Joseph Peel
Councilman Javis Gibbs
Councilwoman Rose Whitehurst
Councilwoman Katherine Felton
Councilman Ronnie Morris
Councilman Johnnie Walton

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Montre' Freeman
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Electric Superintendent Donnell White
Chief of Police J. Phillip Webster
Chief of Staff Monica Cole
Human Resources Director Montique McClary
Fire Chief Chris Carver
ECDI Director Debbie Malenfant
Finance Director Alicia Steward
Assistant Finance Director Brian Lewis
Public Utilities Director Dwan Bell
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark
Grants Management Specialist Jon Hawley
IT Director Matthew Simpson
IT Systems Analyst Pedro Holley II
City Clerk April Onley
Executive Admin / Deputy Clerk Samantha Evans

The City Council's organizational meeting was called to order by Mayor Rivers at 7:22 p.m. MACU President John Maurice provided the invocation, after which everyone joined for the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval:

Mayor Rivers welcomed everyone to the organizational meeting. He again thanked MACU for allowing the use of their space and recognized them as a remarkable religious university and a great asset to Elizabeth City. He thanked Judge Reid for making herself accessible for the Council's swearing in, as she had done many times before. He noted they had something special for her and would be getting that to her shortly.

He asked the Council's pleasure on the prepared agenda.

Motion was made by Councilman Joseph Peel, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence to approve the agenda as presented. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Biggs, Peel, Gibbs, Whitehurst, Spence, Felton, Morris and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

2. Recognition of Immediate Past Councilor:

a. Barbara Baxter

Mayor Rivers called past Councilor Baxter to the podium. He stated that over the past 18 months, former Councilwoman Baxter had served as the Fourth Ward’s Councilwoman. She represented the City of Elizabeth City well and was a voice for those who needed to be heard. As mayor, he thanked her for her service to the City. He presented her with her Council photo, her nameplate and a plaque emblazoned with her dates of service.

3. Consideration – Election of Mayor Pro Tempore:

Mayor Rivers opened the floor for nominations. Councilwoman Felton offered that since the terms that just ended were rather short, she’d like to nominate Kem Spence to serve as Mayor Pro Tem again. Councilman Walton said he believed in diversity, equity and inclusion. He liked that this Council believed in collaborating. He had the idea of nominating Mrs. Felton, but he understood her reasoning with giving it back to Spence and he concurred.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Katherine Felton to appoint Kem Spence as Mayor Pro Tem, seconded by Councilman Johnnie Walton. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Biggs, Peel, Gibbs, Whitehurst, Spence, Felton, Morris and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

4. Consideration – Adoption of Rules of Procedure:

Mayor Rivers asked the Council’s pleasure on the Rules of Procedure.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence, seconded by Councilman Jarvis Gibbs to adopt to the Rules of Procedure. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Biggs, Peel, Gibbs, Whitehurst, Spence, Felton, Morris and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

5. Consideration - Adoption of 2024 Meetings Calendar:

Mayor Rivers asked the Council’s pleasure on the 2024 Council Calendar.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Katherine Felton, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence to adopt the 2024 Council Calendar. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Biggs, Peel, Gibbs, Whitehurst, Spence, Felton, Morris and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

Date	Time	Meeting
January 8, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
January 22, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
February 12, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
February 26, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
March 11, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
March 25, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
April 8, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
April 22, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
May 13, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
May 28, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
June 10, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
June 24, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
July 8, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
August 12, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
August 26, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session

	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
September 9, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
September 23, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
October 14, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
October 28, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
November 12, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
November 25, 2024	5:30 p.m.	Work Session
	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting
December 9, 2024	7:00 p.m.	Regular Meeting

6. Remarks by Mayor and City Councilors:

Mayor Rivers shared that he'd been blessed over the past year and owed more than he could say to his lovely wife, Nina for her endless support. He was looking forward to seeing the Council continue working together as a team with the citizens of Elizabeth City. He felt the Council did things in the past term that set the tone for how to work together because even if they disagreed, they all had an underlying desire to make the City better. He believed they would continue to strive to be a good example of how to be great, and continue fellowshipping with one another and getting to know one another even better. We want to work together to be a family. It feels good that we have a relationship that we can communicate with one another and we want to continue to work in that way to lead the City. When you look to the Northeast, you will see a star, and that star is Elizabeth City.

Councilman Morris said he looked forward to working with the Council and being part of making Elizabeth City great. He felt he had seen the movement and now he wanted to be part of it. He was open to more than just the Fourth Ward and encouraged anyone in any part of the City to reach out to him if they needed help. He appreciated everyone's votes and kind words of encouragement, and thanked his wife for her support.

Councilman Walton thanked his wife for her many years of endless support because he knew it was not always easy. He believed the Council has made great strides but has not gotten where they want to get yet, though they will. Eagles keep flying no matter what, and we should all try to be like eagles. We are on the path to greatness. We are allowed to make mistakes as long as we keep on the right path.

Councilwoman Felton stated that the last 18 months had been an adventure. She thanked God that she was allowed to serve with this Council. She believed that God had his hands on the Council and as long as they are good stewards of the money and people they are over, she believed that God would continue to look out for them.

Mayor Pro Tem Spence said he was grateful for this assignment because he did not consider this a job. As always, he trusted the process. He could not do this without his wife, his daughters and his family. He was honored to be on this Council and he believed that this would be the Council that continued to move the City forward. He noted that he'd said it before and he'd say it again that, "No weapon formed against us shall prosper."

Councilwoman Whitehurst was very excited about this evening and was happy to be here. She felt this was an opportunity to finish what this team started and it was an incredible journey. She thanked her daughter for coming tonight and offering her support. She believed the real VIPs were the employees of Elizabeth City who she had gotten to know over the last 18 months and she wanted to thank them for everything they did every day. She shared that over the weekend, ECSU held their graduation ceremony during which a speaker made a comment that stuck with her: "Be the leader that you would follow." She said that's what she intended to do.

Councilman Gibbs thanked God for allowing him to continue the opportunity provided to him. He thanked his wife and mother for being present for him tonight. A pastor he often listened to said that to be a leader, you always had to be ready to learn. When the opportunity to be on Council first came to him, he said he was not a politician, but he was told that they didn't need politicians. They needed people who wanted to help people and that's what he's tried to do.

You get a lot of encouragement from people that you know. He asked Russell Paisley to stand, a coworker of his in Norfolk. He shared that this was a person who'd helped him because he believed he was doing good work and he wasn't even someone who could vote for him. It meant a lot to him and people like that putting their faith in him was a strong moment for him. He hoped that he would continue to represent well, even in the face of hard decisions. This team was put together for a reason and if they continued to trust each other, they would lead the City down the right path.

Councilman Peel said his wife couldn't be here tonight as she was under the weather, but he would be remiss not to mention that without her support over the years, he couldn't have served the community as he had. This Council was fun to work with and they accomplished some things, but they had also been able to be in a grace period of saying, "We didn't do that." The next two years, we won't be able to say that as much. There's a lot of work in front of this Council. One of the things that will help us move forward is that we do get along and work together well, which is different from many Councils in the past. He thanked the community for having faith in his abilities and looked forward to the next two years.

Councilman Biggs thanked his wife and his daughters, as well as his parents who were also present this evening. He noted that there's a lot that goes on between the two meetings per month that you see televised. Local government affects everyone. You see what happens at the state and federal levels and it doesn't affect our daily lives the way local government does. It's an honor to be elected to serve again. He said it was also an honor to serve with Councilwoman Baxter, as he was sure it would be to serve with incoming Councilman Morris. He looked forward to the support for everything they will face in the future.

Mayor Rivers recognized Bennie Murphy for running a great campaign. He announced that there would be a mayor's ball, the first of its kind, which would be taking place in 2024. All the mayors who were still living would be invited to participate. They would be raising funds for the Police Athletic League and Arts of the Albemarle. He stated that he wanted to support our youth as much as possible in the coming years because they are truly the future. Over the last 18 months, he was always excited when children would see him and say, "That's the mayor." He wanted to continue to make the City a better place for our children.

7. Recess:

Having no further business to be discussed, Mayor Rivers declared the meeting recessed until 2:00 p.m. on December 12th when the Council would gather in front of City Hall for a tour of City facilities.

E. Kirk Rivers
Mayor

April Onley, NCCMC
City Clerk

