

**City Council Recessed Meeting  
December 12, 2023**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City called their previously recessed meeting back to order on Tuesday, December 12, 2023 in front of the Gardner Municipal Building at 306 East Colonial Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Kirk Rivers  
Councilman Johnson Biggs (*Not on bus*)  
Councilman Joseph Peel  
Councilman Javis Gibbs  
Councilwoman Rose Whitehurst  
Councilwoman Katherine Felton  
Councilman Ronnie Morris

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem Kem Spence  
Councilman Johnnie Walton

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Montre' Freeman  
Chief of Police J. Phillip Webster  
Chief of Staff Monica Cole  
Fire Chief Chris Carver  
Public Utilities Director Dwan Bell  
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark  
IT Director Matthew Simpson  
City Clerk April Onley

Mayor Rivers called the recessed meeting back to order at 2:05 p.m. He announced that this was a continuation of the organizational meeting from Monday, December 11, 2023, and would allow those members who were available a chance to tour a few City facilities in the Senior Center van. He explained that there was no set agenda or any strict timeline, but it would serve to highlight some areas of the City that the Council may have never seen, which would provide a better understanding about certain projects or requests.

**1. City Tour:**

**a. Gymnasium / Betsy Town Flats**

The bus stopped at this location and Council toured the progress on the gymnasium.

**b. Harney Street Fire Station**

The bus stopped at this location, but everyone remained on the bus. Chief Carver noted that when this station was built, the Fire Department was running about 400 calls per year and they are now up to about 1,700. They originally advised not to build in this location at all. In recent years, the department's response times have increased dramatically, particularly toward the Walmart area. This station consists of two small bays, and they do keep the boat here. There is one bedroom with three beds. The officer in charge has a desk and bed crammed into one room. There is a unisex bathroom. We are not "21<sup>st</sup> century." The 2021 study advised that this station should move to Hughes Blvd. There is no room in this station and it can only house four people. It was suitable as a temporary station in the 90s, but it has far exceeded its lifespan. Additionally, the building is not wind-rated, so personnel cannot stay here during a storm. There are also flood issues. The building could possibly be kept as storage. Councilwoman Whitehurst felt it might be good as an inner-city focus building due to the location so suggested that we consider repurposing it as outreach of some sort.

**c. Hummer Park**

The bus did not stop at the park, but this location was identified when driving past.

**d. Wastewater Treatment Facility**

The bus stopped at this location and passengers disembarked to tour the facility.

*(Clerk's Notation: Councilman Biggs also visited this location; however, he arrived separately.)*

**e. Knobbs Creek Substation**

The bus pulled over at this location so the Council could see the issue at hand. Director Bell explained that there are gasses eating the substation / pump station here. He pointed out the deterioration to the fence. The wet well from the County is septic by the time it gets to our side. It is explosive so we can't send anyone down in there. He is working with Timmons Group on upgrades. He met with the County last Thursday about things they will have to do and will put them in contact with someone who has a product to put oxygen in their system. The City has upgraded here before after a bad spill. Mayor Rivers asked this corrosion is doing anything to the neighborhood. Director Bell said no one has complained, but there are likely problems. The County just needs to put a chemical in to get oxygen in there. He did find out that there was a contract with the County that just ended in September and we could technically tell them we will not take their sewer any longer if they don't do what they need to do. Mayor Rivers agreed that we need to do what we must to keep everyone safe. Director Bell stated that they're willing to take a look at it. The agreement was put together in 2004 or 2005, so it preexisted the county manager and utility director, but they're willing to look into it. The Clerk dug the agreement up for him when he'd asked her to see what she could find a few months back and it just happened that it was getting ready to end. Councilwoman Whitehurst felt that they needed to put this on the next work session agenda and discuss it ASAP. Are the gasses in the air or coming from the ground? Director Bell explained that they are coming from the wet well. Some days you can smell it. They seep out of the well itself. Councilwoman Whitehurst asked if we'd gotten air samples or knew of an agency that could get them. Director Simpson noted that he went in there for five minutes and a ring he was wearing turned brown. Director Bell said he had it tested, just not the air samples. He has met with the County several times. Mayor Rivers felt that this was something that should be dealt with ASAP. We need to have this on a timetable for them getting it squared away. He said he wanted the oxygen in the lines by their meeting in January. He would like Director Bell to send a certified letter requesting that as soon as possible.

**f. Knobbs Creek Recreation Center**

The bus stopped at this location for passengers to disembark. Mayor Rivers pointed out the nature trail that ran into the woods. He said they'd looked into rehabbing the nature trail with Green Saves Green and estimated around \$75,000, but the quotes came back at about double that, so it got pushed back. Manager Freeman led everyone into the building to show them the gym floor, which is in very poor shape.

**g. Electric Distribution Center**

The bus stopped at this location, but everyone remained on the bus. This facility was built in the 1960s. There is no place to store transformers or equipment to keep it out of the weather. They need some sort of lean-to or shelter. Additionally, we have safety issues. Councilman Peel reminded everyone that this fund is a standalone pot of money so they had to keep that in mind as well.

*(Clerk's Notation: The bus returned to City Hall for Councilman Gibbs and Councilwoman Felton to depart at 3:32 p.m.)*

**h. Public Safety Building**

This facility was identified when driving past.

**i. Prichard Street / Garage**

This location was briefly toured.

**j. Armory**

The bus stopped here for everyone to step inside the location shortly.

**k. Wellfield**

This served as the last site on the tour before the bus returned to City Hall.

**2. Adjournment:**

Having no further business to be discussed, Mayor Rivers declared the meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

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E. Kirk Rivers  
Mayor

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April Onley, NCCMC  
City Clerk

