

**City Council Regular Session
March 22, 2021**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in regular session on Monday, March 22, 2021 in Council Chambers, located on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Administration Building, 306 E. Colonial Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Bettie Parker
Councilman Billy Caudle
Councilman Michael Brooks
Councilwoman Jeannie Young
Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton
Councilman Kem Spence
Councilman Darius Horton
Councilman Gabriel Adkins

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilman Chris Ruffieux

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Montre' Freeman
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Finance Director Evelyn Benton
Chief of Police Eddie Buffaloe
Deputy Chief of Police James Avens
Interim Electric Superintendent Bob Vannoy
Assistant City Manager Angela Judge
Human Resources Director Montique McClary
Public Utilities Director Dwan Bell
Fire Chief Chris Carver
Interim Community Development Director Debbie Malenfant
Planner Kellen Long
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark
IT Director Matthew Simpson
City Clerk April Onley
Deputy City Clerk Doris Walton

(Clerks Notation: This meeting was conducted differently due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Councilors met in Chambers and staff members participated remotely through Google Meet. The meeting was live streamed on Channel 11 and the City's website for the public, who were not allowed to attend the meeting. The public comments were received via email and are included in full as received.)

The City Council regular session was called to order by Mayor Bettie Parker at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Parker welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized Councilman Brooks to give the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Parker advised that Councilman Ruffieux had a death in his family and would be absent from the meeting.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval:

Mayor Parker asked the Council's pleasure on the presented agenda. Councilman Brooks said he would like to add a discussion on security cameras onto the regular agenda.

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle, seconded by Councilman Darius Horton to approve the agenda with the requested adjustment. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle, and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

2. Statement of Disclosure:

The City Clerk read the Statement of Disclosure. No conflict of interest disclosures regarding items listed on the agenda were made.

3. Presentation:

a. Proclamation – Johnnie B. Walton Day in Elizabeth City

Mayor Parker read a proclamation in honor of Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton into the record:

PROCLAMATION HONORING JOHNNIE B. WALTON

WHEREAS, Johnnie Walton has dedicated his life to enriching the lives of others through his love of sports and has enlisted boundless time and energy to seeing his torch carried on through the youth in our community; and

WHEREAS, he has enriched the lives of numerous individuals through his time as both a player and a coach; and

WHEREAS, his talent and drive led him to make history in 1969, when he became the first African American quarterback from the State of North Carolina to play in the National Football League; and

WHEREAS, he began his illustrious football career with Elizabeth City State University, where he played from 1965-1968, earning All-Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association honors his senior year and leading ECSU to an 8-1 record; and

WHEREAS, his presence as a professional in the game paved the way for many of the young African American men who are part of the game today; and

WHEREAS, his lifelong dedication to football has been of great influence to the appreciation that children and adults alike feel for the game, not just in our community, but all across the state; and

WHEREAS, his excellence and vast contributions to the sport were formally recognized by the CIAA when he was honored with induction into the John B. McLendon Hall of Fame on February 26th, 2021; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his sports career, his selfless efforts as a long-standing member of the City Council have served to better our community and provide a voice for the citizens of the 4th Ward; and

WHEREAS, the City of Elizabeth City is extraordinarily grateful for all that he has contributed through his talents and expertise to help us grow and thrive as a diverse and inclusive community.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bettie J. Parker, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor and on behalf of the entire City Council and all our citizens, do hereby tender to Johnnie B. Walton, this proclamation of public recognition, extending to him our deep appreciation for his distinguished service and declare the date of the 26th of February to hereby be known as Johnnie B. Walton Day in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley, NCCMC
City Clerk

Mayor Pro Tem Walton thanked the Council for the proclamation and said he was grateful to have received such an honor from his peers.

4. Comments from the Public:

(Clerk's Notation: Due to the pandemic, all public comments were received in writing and read into the record by the Clerk, as the public was not able to attend in person. The comments are presented here in full.)

Mayor Parker inquired of the City Clerk if there were any public comments to be read into the record. Upon the Clerk's response that there were several comments, the Mayor asked that they be read in the order they were received.

Shirley Hinton – 819 Walker Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC – “To Those who will discuss the rezoning and affordable housing on Walker Avenue: I am not in support of the new development for several reasons. 1) The traffic on Walker Ave is so much that people like me who have lived over 50 years can't even get out of my driveway safely. We already have the traffic from the Bright Beginning Day Care as well as the Walkers Landing Housing. Then when there is an accident on Halstead Blvd traffic is directed through Walker Ave. There is also the issue of parade traffic through our street. People who live in rented apartments don't value their property like those who are buying or own their homes. If the entrance could be cut off from Walker Ave and direct traffic to Liberator St just like Walkers Landing II, be better. This makes home owners in the neighborhood, mostly black, property depreciate. People from the housing complex brings their bulky items and sit on Walkers for trash pick-up when it's not supposed to be. Please think seriously about this. Shirley Hinton.”

Ruth Glasper – 107 Carver Street, Elizabeth City, NC – “Dear Sir: I am against rezoning request from general business to apartment district. I opposed this action because the more apartments are put up, the more we have trouble with drug trafficking, shooting incidents, breaking into housing, elderly scared to sit on their porches or get exercising they need. Homes get depreciated. Taxes goes up. The youth are put in danger being influence by incoming traffic and etc. Thank you.”

Cynthia Whidbee McCalop – 800 Southern Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC – “Good afternoon. I am writing in regards to your proposal to place "affordable housing" on Walker's Avenue and have some major concerns. Why would you place "affordable housing" right next to a day care center, with senior living units in the vicinity and in back, units for the disabled? If these "affordable housing" units are what I think they are, it would appear that you are not taking the safety of the other citizens in that neighborhood in question - there are other vacant spaces in the county. Why was this particular section chosen? Was it because you felt the citizens of the area would not speak out? The image that this move will present is one where it appears the city may be trying to put a certain group of individuals in one section of town. If true, then is it your goal to lower the property value of homes there and then create your own southern version of gentrification? Why an "affordable housing"

unit? (And i say unit as this property doesn't appear to be large enough for single family homes). At this time, the city is in need of more affordable housing for seniors and the disabled. An assisted living facility that is designed to allow seniors to be safe, healthy and active would be a more fitting use of that particular property. And have you given any thought the increase on crime? Residents in that area, particularly seniors, are more prone to be victims who will not speak out as they are afraid of retaliation. What will you say to them should this be approved and they see more crime in their neighborhoods? This "affordable housing" project may be needed but we don't need another one in the 3rd ward. And we don't need another one on Walker's Avenue. If you must, then you must utilize another empty property in another part of the town. I see no reason why you can't build along the Connector Road (bypass near Wal-Mart) or Body Road. There are empty properties near Tooley Harbor and in Weeksville. There are empty properties near Creekside Farms and on the north side of town. Walker's Avenue IS NOT the only place to put an "affordable housing" unit.

Glen Bowman, PhD – ECSU – 1704 Weeksville Road, Elizabeth City, NC - "Two of the History faculty at Elizabeth City State University--Dr. Latif Tarik and Dr. Glen Bowman--are writing a grant proposal to have a historical monument placed curbside at 303 East Main Street in order to recognize the sit-ins that took place at that location starting on February 11, 1960. At that time, this was the home of the Elizabeth City location of the nationwide department store chain W.T. Grant, whose Southern locations traditionally had a Whites-only policy regarding lunch counters. Due to boycotts, the non-violent activism of Elizabeth City State Teachers College students and other young people, and the principled actions of citizens, including members of the Elizabeth City Better Citizens League, that location was peacefully desegregated on July 11, 1960. As a result, Elizabeth City became one of the first cities in North Carolina with desegregated lunch counters. If the proposal is successful, the historical marker would be an official part of the North Carolina Civil Rights Trail. The markers themselves would be funded by the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, in association with the NC African American Heritage Commission, the State Office of Archives and History, and Visit NC. Markers will be 18" x 32" cast aluminum with a 7' aluminum pole. Each marker's title line will allow 15 characters. The five body lines can have 27 characters each, including spaces and punctuation. Each marker will feature the NC Civil Rights Trail logo and color scheme. In preparation, the professors have already contacted Mayor Parker, the office of City Manager Freeman, as well as Ms. Long and Ms. Malenfant of the City Planning Department. Drs. Tarik and Bowman invite questions and will happily provide answers, including a photo of a marker that has already been placed, if so requested. If their proposal is successfully funded, Drs. Tarik and Bowman look forward to working with City Council in establishing a marker that will help preserve the unique history of Elizabeth City, and will be a point of pride not only for current citizens but for their posterity."

5. Public Hearings:

a. Hold a Public Hearing – Case No: CUP 01-21 filed by Grace Montessori Academy, Inc. for the property located at 103 Tanglewood Parkway, Suite N.

Mayor Parker recognized City Manager Freeman to begin the discussion. Mr. Freeman said this public hearing was for an application to open Grace Montessori Academy near Walmart (103 Tanglewood Parkway, Suite N). Planner Kellen Long said there was a responding call near the property, and the property was notified by the Fire Marshal, which resulted in the property being closed to students until the proper permits were received. This process was one of steps to receive the necessary permits.

Mayor Parker declared the public hearing open and inquired of the City Clerk if there were any speakers present. The Clerk replied that there were no speakers for this hearing.

Planner Long briefly explained that the purpose of this hearing was for a Conditional Use Permit for the operation an elementary school / classroom in a 4,000-foot unit with students ranging from first grade to sixth grade. Application was heard by the TRC on February 23rd, where comments from the Fire Department noted improvements that were required and have since been worked on by the applicant. All comments and questions were addressed and the TRC voted to approve the application pending all requirements were met. She

reminded the Council that this case is quasi-judicial, which meant there were three standards that must be considered. She added that a script had been provided to the Council on the CUP procedure that they could refer to if needed.

Mayor Parker declared the public hearing closed.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young to approve the CUP for Grace Montessori with the conditions recommended by staff. The motion was seconded by Councilman Kem Spence. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

b. Hold a Public Hearing – Local Landmark Status to former Elizabeth City High School / Elizabeth City Middle School at 306-312 North Road Street, by ordinance;

Interim Community Development Director Malenfant explained this public hearing was for designating historic landmark status for the former Elizabeth City Middle School at 306-312 North Road Street. She said the process for landmark status is defined by statute, and the ultimate decision is made by the local governing agency. The only other property deemed landmark was one of the buildings that was formerly part of the Weatherly Candy factory. On February 26th, the State Historic Preservation Office gave a supportive response to determine that the building has the requisite special significance and integrity for landmark designation. Both structures meet the age requirement, with one built in 1923 and one in 1951. The buildings are considered the center of the City's public educational system in the early 1920s. The main building was designed by the 2nd and 3rd licensed architects in NC. Both buildings have maintained a high degree of architectural distinctiveness and integrity. The famous EC High School Marching Band Program began there in 1931. The facility housed 7-11 grades until 1946; the 1st 12th graders graduated in 1946. It was a white-only school until integration in 1964. City and County schools consolidated in 1967, and shortly after in 1969, it became a junior high. The building was used as a middle school in the 70s through 2005, when it was vacated.

Ms. Malenfant said that if granted local landmark status, it would qualify for a 50% property tax deferral annually. Currently, there are \$0 in taxes collected annually by both City and County; this would increase to \$18,012.50 for City and \$21,175 for County. \$180,125 for City and \$211,750 for County over a 10-year period. There would also be significant direct and indirect economic impact or construction development projects, including 147.5 jobs created and \$115,651.55 annual sales tax revenue generated by spending of residents, estimated at \$1.2 million over a 10-year period. She added that James Flanigan of J.D. Lewis was available on behalf of the applicant for questions if needed.

Mayor Parker opened the public hearing and asked the Clerk if there were any speakers. The Clerk replied that there were none. The Mayor closed the hearing.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Kem Spence to approve the landmark status and adopt the attached ordinance.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked how many different exits there would be from the property because it got fairly crowded in the area in the morning. Ms. Malenfant said the TRC would be reviewing the property for matters such as that, but had not done so yet. Mr. Flanigan said they were following the current curb cuts and maintaining as is. He noted there were two exits on Elizabeth and two on Road, and one that could only be used as an entrance only at this time.

Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle, and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

**ORDINANCE # 03-01
Local Landmark Status**

**(PINs 891420804481; 891420802560; 891420802574;
891420802599;891420806651; and 891420807538)**

WHEREAS, General Statute 160D-940-946 (Formerly §160A-400.1-400.14) enables municipalities to create historic preservation commissions and to designate local historic districts and landmarks; and,

WHEREAS, General Statute 160D-945 (Formerly §160A-400.5) requires a local landmark to be deemed to be of special significance in terms of its historical, prehistorical, architectural, or cultural importance, and to possess integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association; and,

WHEREAS, any substantial exterior design changes to a designated local landmark are subject to the design review procedures of the Elizabeth City Historic Preservation Commission; and

WHEREAS, if modifications are made that affect the property's historical, prehistorical, architectural, or cultural importance or integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association, landmark status may be removed by action of City Council upon recommendation of the historic preservation commission; and

WHEREAS, §105-278 states that real property designated as a historic landmark by local ordinance is designated a special class of property under authority of Article V, Sec. 2(2) of the North Carolina Constitution; and

WHEREAS, upon application by the property owner and upon approval of such classification by City Council, a property so classified shall be taxed uniformly as a class in each local taxing unit on the basis of fifty percent (50%) of the true value of the property; and

WHEREAS, the difference between the taxes due on the basis of fifty percent (50%) of the true value of the property and the taxes that would have been payable in the absence of the classification provided for shall be a lien on the property of the taxpayer as provided in G.S. 105-355(a). The taxes shall be carried forward in the records of the taxing unit or units as deferred taxes; and

WHEREAS, the deferred taxes for the preceding three fiscal years are due and payable in accordance with G.S. 105-277.1F when the property loses the benefit of this classification as a result of a disqualifying event;

WHEREAS, the applicant, JD Lewis Construction Management, requested the exterior portions of the subject parcels (PINs 891420804481; 891420802560; 891420802574; 891420802599; 891420806651; and 891420807538) be designated as a local landmark; and,

WHEREAS, the applicant has the property owner's permission to make the request; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Elizabeth City Historic Preservation Commission held a public hearing on January 13, 2021 to consider the local landmark; and,

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Commission found the property to satisfy the significance and integrity criterion and recommended local landmark designation; and,

WHEREAS, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office was given 30 days to review and provide comment on the substance and effect of the landmark designation as required by §160D-946 (formerly §160A-400.6); and,

WHEREAS, on February 26, 2021 favorable comment was received from the State Historic Preservation Office in support of local landmark designation; and,

WHEREAS, the City Council, after a separate public hearing finds the property to be of special historical, prehistorical, architectural, or cultural significance; and to possess integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED that the City Council of the City of Elizabeth City does hereby designate the exterior portions of the subject parcels as a local historic landmark, and the City does hereby afford the parcel such favorable tax treatment.

ADOPTED, this the 22nd day of March, 2021.

Bettie J. Parker Mayor

April D. Onley, NCCMC
City Clerk

6. Consent Agenda: (City Manager Recommends Approval)

Mayor Parker asked that City Manager Freeman read the items on the Consent Agenda into the record.

- a. Consideration – Accept Final Offer for 304 East Broad Street Property;**
- b. Consideration – Accept Final Offers for Southern Avenue Properties;**
- c. Consideration – Accept Final Offers for South Martin Street Properties;**
- d. Consideration – Accept Bid for Street Resurfacing;**
- e. Consideration – Authorize Live Burn of Various Structures;**

(End of Consent Agenda)

Mayor Parker asked Council's pleasure on the Consent Agenda, as presented.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Young, seconded by Councilman Darius Horton to approve the Consent Agenda. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

7. Regular Agenda:

- a. Any item Pulled from the Consent Agenda**

There were no items pulled from the Consent Agenda.

- b. Consideration – Approve Various Appointments to Personnel Committee;**

City Manager Freeman explained the Personnel Committee was not a Committee that met on a regular basis – only on a case by case basis. He announced the names for appointment were John Etheridge, Colbert Respass, Rhonda Twiddy, Tammy Sawyer and Ella Fields Bunch; each would be appointed for a three-year term expiring in 2024. One candidate, Mrs. Sylvia Berry, was interested in re-appointment. He advised that there was no action required by the Council, as this was a Mayoral appointment; this simply came forward as a matter of transparency in order for the Council to be aware of the appointments.

- c. Consideration – Call for a Public Hearing – Fee Adjustments for Parks and Recreation Activities;**

Director Clark said as staff were looking at the current fees, it appeared they were set low compared to what we are paying our instructors. This increase is being done in the interest

of being more self-sustainable. He advised that the County had already been consulted and had voted in favor of this increase.

Motion was made by Councilman Gabriel Adkins, seconded by Councilman Kem Spence to call for a public hearing on April 12th to discuss increasing the Parks and Recreation fees. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Caudle, Horton and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

d. Discussion / Consideration – Rezoning for Walker Avenue (As Requested by Councilman Spence);

City Manager Freeman explained that this was an item that had previously failed during the February 22nd meeting; when that occurs, only the prevailing party is able to add the item back to the agenda. He noted that Councilman Spence had been in the original winning “nay” votes, therefore was able to request the item be placed back on the agenda. City Manager Freeman asked Interim Community Development Director Malenfant if she had anything to add. Ms. Malenfant said the original application had been provided as backup and none of the details of the application had been changed since original presentation. City Attorney Morgan said if the Council wished to change their vote, the proper action would be to rescind the prior action and then make a new motion. Councilman Spence asked Mr. Morgan if the company could still put apartments in even without the rezoning. Mr. Morgan said they could still likely put some in, but most likely at a lower density. Ms. Long replied that that was true – they were allowed, but the density would be lower. She said as it was zoned now, there could be retail, restaurants, anything in general business. Councilman Spence said he was very against an apartment complex going into that space. He said he was also against a store going there. He asked if it was changed from business to residential, could we make them put a senior living home there instead? Ms. Long said the Council could be part of the technical review process once the site plan was submitted, but they wouldn’t be allowed to limit all the uses. Councilman Spence said he was confused because the last time this was discussed, he was told the Council could definitely control what went there. He said he spoke with many individuals in the area and they were told a senior living facility was going there, which they were fine with, but they were not fine with apartments. He said now it appears the Council doesn’t have the control he thought they had. Mr. Morgan said the UDO determined what the standards were, and that we as a City can control that by making sure any applicant follows the UDO to the letter. He said if the property is not rezoned, anything under the allowed use could be placed there. Likewise, if it is rezoned, anything according to that rezoning could be placed there.

Councilwoman Young said she understood that it was being said that we could control certain aspects, like making them put a bike path, sidewalks and things like that, but she said she may have misunderstood the original discussion. Councilman Spence said he and Councilman Brooks had the same concern about another apartment complex in the area; he said they were both against that happening. Councilman Adkins said he felt the Council was getting misleading information. He said they were told staff presented it incorrectly the first time, and then the Council was told they needed to use certain wording as to why they didn’t agree with the rezoning. He said Councilman Spence used the wording he was told to use and was still told they were out of order. He said then the City Manager said they could dictate what they wanted there, but now they’re being told that they can’t even do that. He said, “Every time we come back to a different meeting, it’s something different. What are we in change of? What does our input mean with anything? This project was brought back to the table and now he’s confused again, I’m confused again and where do we go? Are we going to be told we did something wrong again at the next meeting? The residents told us that an apartment complex is not wanted in that area. I’m confused again. I thought we could put stipulations on what we wanted to have there, but now our thoughts will only be taken as consideration.”

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he didn’t believe boards had more control than the Council, but that’s the reason he wanted some things on the next work session. He asked Ms. Long if time was a factor in the rezoning. Ms. Long said it was if the application was submitted for the TRC. If the site plan was approved by TRC, the City Council had 30 days to request to see the site plan after it was approved by TRC. The Council could then review it during the next Council meeting and have 21 days to respond. Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked if it had

been to TRC yet. Ms. Long replied that it had not. She said the timing of the site plan and the rezoning were two completely different avenues. She said submittal for site plans was the first week of the month, with meetings the last week of the month. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he thought no action should be taken on this matter tonight until more discussion could be had.

Councilwoman Young said she was a little frustrated. She said she didn't understand why this was so difficult. "We've all been on Council for a long time. This is what happens every time someone submits to do a project." She said she was baffled with "how they want to work staff to death with things the Council should already know." She felt that it was time they should be concentrating on other things instead of something they should already know.

City Attorney Morgan reiterated that the only thing that could be considered at this time was the rezoning. He said they could not look at the plans; that could only be done once a site plan was submitted. Once that process occurred and was reviewed by the TRC, then the Council could pull the plan and have input at that point. He stated that the Council cannot consider site plans on the issue unless it's a conditional rezoning issue.

Councilman Brooks said when a project comes up and the people in the community who vote him in, he thanks them for taking the time to write in about their disapproval. "That's the concern. We already voted, so we're just throwing things in the air. As I understand it, the concern is density – that means the number they can put there. Because of the crime, traffic and noise – we're not spinning. Let's be true to what we write on paper. The City Council adopted goals and objectives and number six was to improve safety and quality of all neighborhoods, and these people have written in and told you they don't feel safe. I refuse to do this to these people. We're not going back to review this – we represent these people and they're speaking through us. It's already been voted on. We don't need density." He said he didn't want to keep bringing it up. He said that he thought it was a travesty to try to shove something down someone's throat. He said, "You don't care. You don't live in the neighborhood. Young people are killing each other. We don't care, we going to do it anyway. You're wondering why this has become a messy topic, it's because we're continuing to make people spin around in poverty. We have a lot of open fields in Elizabeth City. Some of them are for sale. Buy that property and build it there. Why do you want to build on top of other people? There's no doubt where I stand. I stand with what the people are telling me constantly. I refuse to turn my back on the people and what they're telling me. It's a travesty that the Council is listening to what these people are saying and still trying to shove it down their throats."

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked Ms. Long if the UDO could be changed, and if so, how often it could be done. Ms. Long said it can be changed through a text amendment and could be done unlimited times. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said that process should be looked into then, as it could be controlled. He said he believed we should be progressive. He said he just wanted to make things clear for everyone around the table.

Councilman Spence said he was the person who brought this back to the agenda, but he continued to do his research. He asked if they can put apartments anyway, why are we even rezoning it? He said, "Instead of 60, they could just only do 25 or 30 or so. Why is it so dire that we change it?" He said it should be left exactly like it is and if they don't agree with the plans later, they can disagree with those down the road. Ms. Long said the density is 10-12 units per acre. Mayor Parker asked how many acres were there. Ms. Long said it was about three. Mayor Parker said they could still put a good deal there without a rezoning.

Councilman Gabriel Adkins made a motion to take no action. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Brooks. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Horton, Caudle, and Adkins. Against: Young. Motion carried.

e. Security Cameras (As Added By Councilman Brooks);

Mayor Parker recognized Councilman Brooks for his comments. Councilman Brooks mentioned the security cameras on Carver Street and questioned if they are working or how

well. Chief Buffaloe said they are operable and a monthly report is sent out that dictates if there are any issues. Councilman Brooks said he sees areas that he doesn't believe the cameras are picking up. He said the cameras should tell us what maybe people are afraid to say when it comes to criminal activity. He asked about the process of having a camera put on Carver, pointed toward the Debry area. Chief Buffaloe asked if he was requesting the placement of an additional camera. Councilman Brooks said there was a lot of criminal activity on the corner that leads to Debry and this wasn't the first conversation they'd had about the problem. He said he saw an abundance of activity and he was concerned that the police weren't even riding by to make the people feel safe. He asked if the Police Department monitored the area? He asked if there was any direction the Council could give to rectify the situation?

City Manager Freeman said the report went out last week that covered that particular area on Carver Street. He asked if Councilman Brooks wanted to add a camera in that area. Councilman Brooks said he did; he wanted one that reached the opening of Carver Street and Debry. Chief Buffaloe said the cameras were about \$3,000, and if Council gave the direction, he would be happy to accommodate those needs. Councilman Brooks mentioned that his concern was that there were a lot of senior citizens in the area and the cameras helped them feel safe. He said the intention of the cameras when they were put in years ago was to move them as needed. Chief Buffaloe said turning the camera would not address the concern because of the camera's range; it did not have the capability. He pointed out that each camera had a sole purpose. He felt a new camera would be needed to address Councilman Brooks' concern. He said we would need to find the funds to cover another camera for the request to cover the fence and tree line.

Councilman Spence asked if Councilman Brooks needed the camera included in the budget? Councilman Horton asked if it was time sensitive or if it could wait that long? He said if Councilman Brooks felt it was time sensitive, we needed to move forward tonight. Councilman Brooks said he felt it was time sensitive and it needed to be addressed now. He mentioned the Boston Marathon and how they used cameras to identify the criminals.

Councilman Darius Horton made the motion to have City Manager Freeman find funds for the camera. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Brooks.

Councilwoman Young said she felt like we needed to wait because the budget was very tight as it stands. She said we are spending money like crazy and it all has to come from somewhere. She said we should let the Chief determine if he could find the money in his budget.

Councilman Spence said he thought the City should require Debry to close the fence because it used to have a gate, but it's missing now. He felt that if they'd put that back up, that would eliminate a lot of the problem. He said we should also move one of the cameras from an already existing area that doesn't get a lot of issues to this area.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked how much the camera would cost. Chief Buffaloe replied that we'd paid about \$2,990 for a similar camera. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he was sure they could find \$3,000 somewhere for a camera without too much effort.

Councilman Brooks said he did remember Debry closing the gate at one point. He said people were still jumping the gate and tearing through the fence to crawl through, which is how it ended up getting reopened. He said they are determined to come through that fence one way or another. He said if the trash got cleaned up and had a better appearance, he thought it would be improved.

Councilman Kem Spence called for the question, seconded by Councilman Darius Horton. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle, and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

Mayor Parker redirected the Council's attention to the motion on the floor for the purchase of an additional camera, which had been made by Councilman Horton and seconded by Councilman Brooks.

Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Brooks, Walton, Horton, Caudle, and Adkins. Against: Young. Motion carried.

8. Comments and Inquiries on Non-Agenda Items:

Councilman Adkins wanted to know when public speakers can come inside again. Mayor Parker said she would take it under advisement, but we are still under possibility of surges.

Councilman Caudle praised the Water and Sewer Department for helping him last week when he had an issue. He said they did a fantastic job and were very professional and helpful.

Councilman Horton had no comments.

Councilwoman Young had no comments.

Councilman Spence said he had called Chief Buffalo about activities in his neighborhood and wanted to commend him for sending patrol out to make rounds on the regular. It helped a lot to have them ride through. He thanked Director Bell and his staff for their quick response when he had an issue the previous week.

Councilman Brooks thanked the Planning Department for working with the County to get everything cleaned up on the corner of Carver. He said the neighbors had approached him to commend the City on the good work that they did.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said his goal was to make this the year of recognition and he said he believed that was going to happen. He said he believed we are building back and building better. He thanked the Council for recognizing him this evening. He said it was important to recognize people while they are here to appreciate it. He said we need to do things creatively that add quality and memorialize our special people who have given above and beyond and served our community. He said he was happy to hear about the memorial for the sit-in that would likely be going up in the area. He gave Mayor Parker a copy of his book – Underrated.

Councilman Adkins gave his condolences to Councilman Ruffieux for the passing of his father.

City Manager Freeman said he was requesting that the Council allowed him to work with them to get their wants and wishes to be able to move forward with the UDO. Before getting to the next step of the TRC, he wanted to have the Council's wishes on paper, so they could be a lot more directed in how we move and act and what we want to see in neighborhoods.

Mayor Parker said Green Saves Green had a 2021 Spring Litter Sweep and they needed volunteers for community cleanups. They had free cleanup kits while supplies lasted and you could sign up on their website. Mayor Parker said the evidence for herd immunity by the end of the year was trending upwards. People were getting vaccinated every day and there are three vaccines available now, with a possible fourth coming. There is a "light at the end of the tunnel" but we cannot get complacent and comfortable because variants are popping up. Total death - 542,372. This is to be taken seriously. She said the Council hadn't had an outbreak because they had been careful. She said bringing people in from the outside was not where she wanted to go yet because we are still under a state of emergency, but she would see how we could maybe have some flexibility, but what we are doing now had worked for us and gotten us through this so far and she wanted us to stay safe.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker adjourned the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley, NCCMC
City Clerk

