

**City Council Regular Session
March 9, 2020**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in regular session on Monday, March 9, 2020, 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
Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton
Councilman Chris Ruffieux
Councilman Billy Caudle
Councilman Kem Spence (*Arrived at 7:57 p.m.*)
Councilwoman Jeannie Young
Councilman Michael Brooks
Councilman Darius Horton (*Arrived at 7:17 p.m.*)
Councilman Gabriel Adkins

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Rich Olson
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Finance Director Suzanne Tungate
Chief of Police Eddie Buffaloe
Interim Electric Superintendent Bob Vannoy
Assistant City Manager Angela Cole
Human Resources Director Montique McClary
Public Utilities Assistant Director Amanda Boone
Community Development Director Carter Thompson
Parks and Recreation Dexter Harris
Interim Fire Chief Chris Carver
ECDI Director Debbie Malenfant
IT Director Matthew Simpson
Grants Management Administrator Jon Hawley
City Clerk April Onley
Executive Admin / Deputy City Clerk Doris Walton

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 Michael Brooks to give the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval:

Mayor Parker asked the Council's pleasure on the presented agenda. Councilman Brooks asked that the Veteran's Experience Action Center be added to the agenda, as well as the Inmate Service Agreement. Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked to remove item G from the Consent Agenda "Call for a Public Hearing – Financing for Beacon Water Meter Project" and place it on the Regular Agenda.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Michael Brooks to approve the agenda as amended. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, 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 – Mayoral Certificate / EMS Life-Saving Pins – Sergeant Ervin Rodriquez and Officer Jeremy C. Lunsford

Mayor Parker presented Sergeant Rodriguez and Officer Lunsford with mayoral certificates of recognition as well as “life-saving” pins for their efforts in successfully resuscitating an unresponsive patient. Mr. Jerry Newell of EMS and Captain Larry Glass gave a brief presentation on cardiac arrest and the importance of administering quick care if a patient is to be saved. He told the Council that without the work of our officers and their rapid actions, this individual likely would not have been saved.

4. Comments from the Public:

Curtis Chambers – 1031 Northside Road, Elizabeth City, NC – Mr. Chambers stated that he was upset about an article he’d read in the Saturday edition of The Daily Advance. He told the Council that no one made them take this job, and they knew the meetings were long before they ever took the seat. “If you didn’t like the salary, the demands, you shouldn’t have taken the job. No one else gets to vote themselves in a pay raise.” He noted that many people worked many more hours than their jobs required and they didn’t get a say in how much they were paid. He said that he considered the role of councilors to be that of public servants and you should be passionate about the city and the people who elected you, not the money. He urged the Council to set a good example for the citizens and the other members of the Council that they were above that standard. “When you leave office, you need to leave the City in a better place than you found it.” He said that he could not imagine telling the City employees that they weren’t getting a raise, but the Council was; that we weren’t going to be fixing fire trucks, but we were giving Council raises. He pointed out that when our water and sewer is in a better situation, when the potholes are fixed, when Elizabeth City is a shining example of how things should be, only then should there be a pay raise for Council.

Holly Audette – 609 West Main Street, Elizabeth City, NC – Thanked the Council for their commitment to public service, but said they did not deserve more pay. She stated, “I’ve never seen a governing body suggest they deserve a 70%-plus pay raise.” She noted that fairly recently the Council addressed their pay and determined that they should get a COLA when City employees received one, which has been happening for the last several years, and was a fair and reasonable practice. She stated that she hated to publicly discuss the negatives in our community, but when our leaders are asking for such a large pay raise, some things must be looked into. She pointed out that our City’s crime rate is much higher than the national average and lowering that is something we should invest in instead. Elizabeth City is only safer than 6% of other cities in the United States, which she found to be a very concerning statistic.

Kelly Boyd – 313 West Main Street, Elizabeth City, NC – Advised the Council that she is one of three chairpersons on the revised Elizabeth City Crime Watch and has been following with fascination the Council’s consideration for a compensation increase. She said that under normal circumstances, it’s understanding that there are many meetings to attend, but several members rarely show up. She expressed concern that even with the City’s crime rate, we had still tabled four law enforcement positions in order to potentially be able to balance the budget. She noted that the Council did okay two of the four back into active status, which was good, but she still did not believe the Council should give themselves raises. She urged them to use the raises for additional officers or more crime cameras. “When you were elected to represent your wards, you did that knowing what the pay would be.” She opined that when the crime statistics went back down to the level they were at 12 or 15 years ago, then maybe she’d agree that Council deserved a raise.

Anita Hummer – 705 Cedar Street, Elizabeth City, NC – Mrs. Hummer opined that there were other positions within the City that were in need of raises more than the Council, particularly the Police Department, Fire Department and Electric Department. She added that Public Works employees were also often overlooked when it came to raises and that should be looked at as well. She urged the Council to think of our critical needs before thinking of themselves. She noted that during her time on Council, she voted for the COLA and increase in the travel allowance, but she felt this raise was too much and should be reevaluated.

Bill Hiemer – 107 Osprey Cove, Elizabeth City, NC – He stated he was strongly opposed to the \$500 pay increase for the Council and Mayor. He noted that we'd just had an election and had heard no promises during that election that anyone would be giving themselves a raise or requiring the City to pay for their health insurance. He pointed out that with the exception of Councilman Ruffieux, all those present were veterans of the body and knew the requirements and expectations prior to running. "It is disingenuous to now say it's too much work and you now require more pay. If you felt that way, you simply should not have run again." He agreed that improved compensation was a potential way to attract new and better candidates, but if that was really what the Council was after, then they should not vote that to go into effect until the next election. He argued that when you propose and vote for something this outlandish, your judgement on any other issue will be drawn into question. He urged all the members to vote "no" if the proposition for the pay raise is put to a vote.

5. Approval of Minutes:

a. February 21, 2020 – Retreat;

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Darius Horton to approve the minutes as presented. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

b. February 24, 2020 – Work Session;

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Darius Horton to approve the minutes as presented. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

c. February 24, 2020 – Regular Session;

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Darius Horton to approve the minutes as presented. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

5. Consent Agenda:

Mayor Parker requested that City Manager Olson read the items on the Consent Agenda into the record:

a. Consideration – Approval of Budget Amendment – NCLM Safety Grants;

BUDGET AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Elizabeth City that the following amendment be made to the annual budget ordinance for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020:

SECTION I. That the Water & Sewer Fund NCLM Safety Grant Revenue (31-3490-8282) will be increased by \$5,000,

And that the Water & Sewer Fund Fund Balance Appropriated (31-3990-0000) will be increased by \$11,731.25,

And that the Water & Sewer Fund Capital Outlay Equipment (31-8280-7400) will be increased by \$16,731.25,

And that the General Fund NCLM Safety Grant Revenue (10-3490-5800) will be increased by \$5,000,

And that the General Fund Fund Balance Appropriated (10-3990-0000) will be increased by \$8,917,

And that the General Fund Capital Outlay Equipment (10-5600-7400) will be increased by \$13,917.

(This amendment reflects purchases of safety equipment totaling \$30,648.25 and two NCLM safety grants of \$5,000 each.)

This amendment will decrease the Water & Sewer Fund Balance by \$11,731.25.

This amendment will decrease the General Fund Balance by \$8,917.

ADOPTED, this 9th day of March 2020.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

Attest:

April Onley
City Clerk

b. Consideration – Approval of Budget Amendment – PAL Reimbursement;

BUDGET AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Elizabeth City that the following amendment be made to the annual budget ordinance for fiscal year ending June 30, 2019:

SECTION I. That the PAL Mentoring Grant (103490.5160) be increased by \$23,000,
And that the Police PAL Expenditures (105100.3303) will be increased by \$23,000.

(To increase budgeted revenue and expenditures for the PAL Mentoring Grant.)

ADOPTED, this 9th day of March 2020.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

Attest:

April Onley
City Clerk

c. Consideration – Approval of Budget Amendment – Water / Sewer Insurance Reimbursement;

BUDGET AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Elizabeth City that the following amendment be made to the annual budget ordinance for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020:

SECTION I. That the Water & Sewer Fund Insurance Revenue (31-3350-8300) will be increased by \$750.00,

And that the Water & Sewer Fund Vehicle Maintenance (31-8100-1500) will be increased by \$750.00.

(This amendment will authorize the Public Utilities Departments to make repairs needed due to accidents.)

ADOPTED, this 9th day of March 2020.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

Attest:

April Onley
City Clerk

d. Consideration – Approval of Budget Amendment – Project Safe Neighborhoods;

BUDGET AMENDMENT

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Elizabeth City that the following amendment be made to the annual budget ordinance for fiscal year ending June 30, 2019:

SECTION I. That the Project Safe Neighborhoods Grant (103490.5111) be increased by \$55,739,

And that the Police Capital Outlay Equipment (105100.7400) will be increased by \$19,749,

And that the Police Overtime (105100.0220) will be increased by \$30,000,

And that the Police Training (105100.1400) will be increased by \$5,990.

(To increase budgeted revenue and expenditures for the Project Safe Neighborhoods Grant.)

ADOPTED, this 9th day of March 2020.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

Attest:

April Onley
City Clerk

e. Consideration – Award of Audit Contract;

f. Consideration – Authorize MDT and Desktop Computer Donation;

g. Consideration – Call for a Public Hearing – Financing for Beacon Water Meter Project; (*Removed from Consent and Placed on Regular by Mayor Pro Tem Walton*)

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

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

6. Regular Agenda:

a. Consideration – Call for a Public Hearing – Financing for Beacon Water Meter Project (*As Removed from the Consent Agenda by Mayor Pro Tem Walton During Agenda Adjustments and Approval*);

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he did not feel he'd received all of the information and we're now talking about going to a public hearing. He noted that he'd requested that Public Works Director Boone bring him information on a cheaper comparison of water meters and he'd not been provided that to date. City Manager Olson replied that staff was compiling information and would be sending that out, and tonight's request was only to call for a public hearing and not approve anything at this time. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he knew what tonight's meeting was for but he couldn't make a decision without the information he's requested. He said some meters didn't need batteries. He worried that our infrastructure was in bad shape, yet we were buying expensive water meters. Mr. Olson replied that we were suggesting a short-term solution for the proper based on the analysis. He noted that this was not something we'd decided to do overnight, and had been a three or four-year research project. Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked if this was why Ms. Boone had to go to San Diego. Mr. Olson explained that she'd had to go to San Diego for a Public Works conference. Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked if there weren't conferences held in North Carolina. Mr. Olson replied that this was the national conference. Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked how much this travel had cost the City. Mr. Olson asked why Mayor Pro Tem Walton hadn't requested these figures prior to the meeting so he could have provided him with them because they weren't something he had on hand now. Mayor Pro Tem Walton reiterated that he would like the total cost for the meters provided to him as soon as possible.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Billy Caudle to call for a public hearing on the Beacon Water Meter Project to be held on March 23, 2022 and adopt the resolution authorizing BB&T financing at that time.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he felt that those motions should be separate because if we don't approve the meters, why would we approve the financing? Mr. Olson replied that the only thing the Council was doing this evening was passing the item forward for public hearing. Councilman Horton opined that the Council was in support of moving forward with the public hearing, but the financing piece was a concern for him as well. Councilman Brooks agreed that it felt like two motions in one, even if they were related.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton called for point of order. He said that the manager was conferring with the attorney. "We're the owners and he's the manager. That doesn't give him the right to speak with anybody anytime he wants to." Mayor Parker said that we needed to be flexible and asked that we not prolong the conversation. Attorney Morgan asked for clarification from Councilman Brooks – was he asking for two public hearings, one on the meter project and another on the financing? Councilman Brooks said that was correct.

Councilman Caudle pointed out that there was a Work Session prior to the next meeting and perhaps we could have a review over the meter selection and why, which would maybe help with some of the concerns. Mr. Olson agreed that staff would provide that for them.

Councilwoman Young said she wanted to keep her motion the way she originally stated it, and if it died, so be it.

Councilman Michael Brooks called for the question. Those voting in favor of calling for the question: Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Motion carried.

Mayor Parker asked the Council's pleasure on the original motion on the table, which had already been made and seconded.

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

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle to call for a public hearing on March 23rd for the purpose of receiving public input on the financing for the Beacon Water Meter Project. The motion was seconded by Councilman Darius Horton.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked if the financing was approved on the 23rd, when would the LGC hear the item? Mr. Olson replied that it would likely be in May. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said we really shouldn't be rushing things if they didn't need to hear it until May. Mr. Olson explained that there were a lot of moving pieces that needed to go with the packet to the LGC, including fully approved and transcribed minutes.

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

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle to call for a public hearing on March 23rd for the purpose of adopting a resolution for financing with BB&T Bank. The motion was seconded by Councilman Darius Horton.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked if it was really necessary for the second motion to be made at all. City Manager Olson explained that what he'd been trying to relay to the Council was that our motion was written as such because the two items were conjoined; if the meters weren't approved, we didn't need the financing and vice versa. One does not exist without the other.

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

b. Consideration – Appointment to Personnel Committee;

Mr. Olson advised that Personnel Committee appointments were the sole responsibility of the Mayor, but were generally brought forward for Council information. This particular appointment was for Paula Bowe, an ECSU educator. There was no action required on the part of the Council.

c. Consideration – Appointment to Community Relations Commission;

Mr. Olson advised that Dr. Andrea Williams, Chair of the CRC, was requesting the appointment of Dr. William Iriarte, a City resident and ECSU educator to the Community Relations Commission.

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle, seconded by Councilman Gabriel Adkins to appoint Dr. Iriarte to the CRC. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. A roll call vote was conducted, which yielded the same results.

d. Consideration – Adoption of Consistency Statement for TA 02-19 Halstead Overlay;

Mr. Olson reminded the Council that during their last meeting they approved TA 02-19 regarding signs in the Halstead Overlay; however, a consistency statement had not been provided with the staff report and would need to be adopted this evening.

Motion to adopt the consistency statement as recorded below was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Billy Caudle. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

“The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City finds the action to amend the text in Article XII, Section 12-10.2(50)(h), Halstead Boulevard Extension Overlay District, of the Unified Development Ordinance to be consistent with Pasquotank County, Elizabeth City Advanced Core Land Use Plan and the following policy:

B. Elizabeth City Land Use Compatibility Policies

Policy 5: Elizabeth City will work with Pasquotank County to develop coordinated land use and development standards regarding signage, landscaping, and other aesthetic related requirements for the Halstead Boulevard Connector.”

e. Consideration / Discussion – Cold Weather Voucher Program Overview and Update;

Mr. Olson advised that this item was originally placed on the February 24th agenda, but had been removed as several members of the Council were not present for the discussion. He highlighted statistics from the voucher program, including the fact that currently 245 vouchers have been issued since the program began on December 1, 2019, at a cost of \$13,989.45 to the City. He stated that the only motel that has been used since the program's inception is the Queen Elizabeth Motel; however, the Whistling Pines was utilized for one night only for three participants. He pointed out that we already have 12 participants of the program who have reached the 10 voucher limit, and one participant has been banned from the Queen Elizabeth Motel. He added that we have also had one OD. He continued that the Police Department's suggestion is that we move back to only offering the vouchers when the weather reaches temperatures of below 32 degrees.

Councilman Horton said he believed the program needed to be revised, as he realized that there were people taking unfair advantage. He stated that he'd learned from staff that people were coming from other cities and towns because they heard they were offering free rooms to stay in, and that was not our intention. This was put in place to help our homeless population. He noted that we do not have a homeless shelter at this time, and we're waiting to see where or if funding for one will come. In the interim, he felt that we should not change the weather guidelines, but maybe the methods by which people are able to receive a voucher. His suggestion was that the Chief of Police or his designee establish an application for a voucher and then vet whether that individual met certain requirements. He added that one of the requirements should be that the person was from Elizabeth City. He said he understood it would take work, but he was not for cutting the program or creating temperature requirements. He urged staff to utilize a database of homeless that we already have compiled by River City CDC or someone else.

Councilman Caudle asked if the Department of Social Service had anything in place that could help us in some way. Mr. Olson explained that DSS did work with the City on certain programs, one of which was LIEAP, which was used to assist low income residents with their utility bills, but those individuals had to show proof of address in order to receive funding under the program. Mr. Olson said he was not aware of any program that the DSS had that would assist the homeless.

Chief Buffaloe stated that there were several other issues with the voucher program that his officers were dealing with, including transportation. This weekend, his officers had 34 participants in the program that they'd had to escort to the motel. Additionally, they were receiving calls for service from participants where one individual would get a voucher and then invite additional people to stay in their room, which was a nuisance for the motel. He reiterated Mr. Olson's comments about the overdose, which occurred with a voucher participant who subsequently had to be banned as well. Additionally, we were getting more and more people from areas outside of our own, such as North Hampton County, Bertie, Currituck and Tidewater.

Councilman Horton agreed that many of these people should not qualify for our vouchers and we should have a policy in place to stop this. He asked if it was even feasible for Chief Buffaloe and his staff to create an application to vet individuals prior to allowing them to receive a voucher. Chief Buffaloe explained that he wouldn't know how to begin vetting these people, as many of them did not have identification and we had to take them at their word. He asked what is the definition of homeless. The burden of determining whether someone is homeless would be falling on the Police Department and that should be a policy decision set by the Council. He suggested we move back to a white flag and cold-weather voucher program.

Councilman Horton said if the Council desired to continue the program, we were going to have to create a policy. He opined that if we had been more proactive about getting a homeless shelter in the past, we would not be in this situation now. He said that the \$13,000 we'd spent on the program did not alarm him, but the people taking advantage of the program did and we needed to look into rectifying that. He added that he would neither vote to end the program or switch it back to cold weather only, but we did need a policy in place.

Chief Buffaloe noted that he'd just received up-to-date numbers on the voucher program, and our total was now at 378 vouchers and \$21,666.45 spent as of 5:00 p.m. today.

Councilwoman Young worried that we're tying up our Police Department unnecessarily and the Council should return to the drawing board to determine how to handle this situation. She wondered if the Council could sit with River City CDC about a program already in place that they could work with them on somehow. She urged the Council to rethink the problem and either meet with River City CDC or attack the problem in a different way.

Councilman Brooks stated that he had no doubt that homelessness was a problem and he saw it every day, but he had a problem when we're giving out our taxpayer's money to people from Virginia and everywhere else. Councilman Brooks asked if, since the program was not funded by federal or state dollars, couldn't we decline giving vouchers to anyone outside of the state? Attorney Morgan replied that we could likely decline anyone outside of the City, but he'd had to check into it to be certain. Councilman Brooks agreed that the program needed to be fine-tuned, and until then, he felt that it should be suspended. He noted that we must address the homeless, but we couldn't keep spending money like this. We've put aside \$50,000 and been through almost half of it.

Motion was made by Councilman Michael Brooks to suspend the homeless voucher program until such time that it could be fine-tuned. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton.

Councilman Spence said he agreed with Councilman Brooks but wanted a friendly amendment that Councilman Horton should be allowed to sit with staff and Chief Buffaloe to come up with a policy.

Councilman Michael Brooks accepted the friendly amendment to his original motion, allowing that the program would be suspended until such time that it could be fine-tuned, but that Councilman Horton would be invited into conversation with Chief Buffaloe and staff on how to streamline the program and establish policy.

Councilman Horton said he could agree with this because it was a problem, but he said we'd have to do this sooner rather than later. He added that if staff has a problem establishing a policy, they should tell the Council now. "If we're going to support the homeless ... let our yay be yay and our nay be nay so we can just finally get somewhere with it."

Mr. Olson said the policy staff recommended was the previous white flag policy, which was clearly defined, but what he was hearing from the Council was that they wanted to go in a different direction. He added that he had some concerns under the Civil Rights Act and CDBG guidelines to make sure we weren't violating anything.

Councilman Horton asked if the vouchers were given out daily or all at once. Mr. Olson said they were given one at a time, although we'd had several people try to get all 10 at once. Councilman Horton agreed that we should not give them out more than one at a

time. He asked Chief Buffaloe how many people were in the motel at this time. Chief Buffaloe said they started coming in at 7:00 and he was already in this meeting, so he wasn't sure. He noted that we do already have 24 now who have used all 10 of their vouchers.

Councilman Horton requested that it be entered into the record that it was his sincere hope that he and staff would be able to meet and have some sort of guidelines in place to be considered at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he had an issue with people speaking out of turn and they needed to raise their hands to be recognized. Mayor Parker noted that he'd spoken without raising his hand earlier too, but she agreed that it was important to keep order. She said she understood he was concerned that the city manager and attorney had been conferring together, and that she'd noticed it as well, but often they needed to speak quickly and that was fine. She pointed out that members of Council often did the same thing and as long as they didn't interrupt others, she did not have a problem with it. She added that she tried to be very flexible, as long as people were not chaotic. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he was informing her of proper procedure and if she didn't want him to do that, then that was fine, but if he had to follow protocol and raise his hand and wait to speak, then no one else should be able to butt in anytime they wanted. Mayor Parker agreed that sometimes things happened, but if someone was conversing with the person next to them, as long as they weren't being distracting or overly long, she would not call them out for doing so. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said a few minutes ago, Councilman Horton was speaking to Chief Buffaloe and the city manager broke in and spoke and that wasn't proper procedure. Mayor Parker said she did not feel we should be rigid to the point where we broke.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton stated that because this was the month of March and weather had a tendency to be extreme, he believed we should bring this back at the end of the month for the meeting of the 23rd. Councilman Horton agreed that it would be back on the next meeting, but it would be suspended effective immediately.

Councilman Brooks asked Mr. Morgan to supply the Council and manager with the information proving it would not be discriminatory to turn away people from Virginia or outside of Elizabeth City because we are not using state or federal money for the program.

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

f. Consideration – Appointment of Fire Chief;

Mr. Olson requested that the Council confirm his appointment of Chris Carver as the City's new Fire Chief. Chief Carver had served as interim since July 2019. In February 2020, an assessment center was conducted, which included five elements. Based on the outcome of the assessment center, he was requesting that the Council confirm his appointment of Chris Carver as Fire Chief.

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

g. Consideration – City Letterhead Policy;

h. Discussion – City Council Compensation Increase;

Mr. Olson advised the Council that staff had received information from the School of Government, which explained that Council may only increase their salaries with the budget ordinance. According to statute, they could decrease their salary and compensation mid-year, but all increases must be handled per the budget ordinance. He pointed out that the proposed increase of \$500 per month would bring the Mayor's current salary of \$9,656 up to \$15,656; Mayor Pro Tem would move from \$8,966 to \$14,966 and Councilors to \$8,274 to \$14,274.

Motion was made by Councilman Chris Ruffieux to cease all salary increase discussions immediately.

Councilman Ruffieux offered that instead of considering giving the body an “outlandish” raise, they should spend their Council meeting time on making Elizabeth City a better place to live, work and go to school.

The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jeannie Young.

Councilman Brooks said he was glad that the new guy got to hear everyone clap because he'd been waiting for this all weekend and he was going to address every single person that came up to speak. Mayor Parker asked that he just address the issue and not people individually. Councilman Brooks said he would not address people by name, but just non-factual information. He stated he found it amazing that people came up now and had so much to say. He asked, “Where were these people when we gave \$5,000 for Christmas lights?” He said Chief Buffalo told us we'd spent more than \$20,000 on people not even from Elizabeth City, but no one wanted to address that. He reminded everyone that Mr. Olson told the Council he didn't need a raise several years ago and the Council gave it to him anyway. “It's okay that the public has an opinion, but give us solutions. Don't just think you're going to scold the Council because there are several ways to look at it.” He wondered where these people were when we had other issues. He said we had two senators for the state of North Carolina who cover more than 10 million residents and only make \$174,000 a year, but our city manager makes \$152,000 and only has to cover \$17,000 people and nobody wants to address that. “You won't change my mind without all the figures. It doesn't make any sense to me.” He said Tarboro's board made more than they did and they were smaller. He wondered why these new faces showed up to chastise them tonight when they never showed up before. “Why didn't you go tell the senators they don't deserve anything? If you don't like the way we're doing things, run for Council yourself. I've done this for years and I can tell who is going to run their mouth about something.” He said they should take into consideration that we gave away \$50,000 to the homeless, \$15,000 to the city manager and he didn't even want it and then \$5,000 for Christmas lights and those were just items he could think of off the top of his head.

Councilman Spence said he did not feel comfortable giving himself a \$500 increase or any increase whatsoever while we give staff nothing. He stated that the staff is underpaid and they are the ones out in the trenches working and he'd rather that money go to them. He noted that he did not intend his statements to be disrespectful of anyone's feelings, but it simply would not sit on his conscious well to give himself an increase while staff is underpaid.

Councilwoman Young opined that she must have a different outlook on what it meant to serve on Council. She stated that when she ran for the board, she never believed that the taxpayers should have to pay her health insurance and foot her raises. She said she knew how much money she'd get paid, but she did not look at it as a way to supplement her income. She explained that she found being on Council as a way to serve and she hoped to leave it a better place than she found it. She said she could not justify taking a raise in her paycheck when we cannot be competitive for positions in our departments. “I feel like it shouldn't be about the money when you are on City Council, but the service.”

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he didn't know why the people that brought it up weren't speaking on it. “I know how people want things to lean because there's always a balancing.” He noted that he'd been on a lot of Councils. He told councilors Adkins, Horton and Brooks that people were here tonight because they wanted to control them. He asked Mr. Olson if we'd given the historical society \$60,000 to get on the register. Mr. Olson replied that he wasn't certain, he thought it might be \$35,000. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he knew it was \$60,000, and the “haves” in Elizabeth City benefit from being on the historical society and they come up here because they're trying to control the four boys. He said one woman came up here who always talks about how bad Elizabeth City is with the crime and ECSU, but she continues to stay here and brings her family here. He wondered why no one was trying to control the virus because they'd have a better shot of controlling that than him. “If Mr. Olson gets his informants together, he knows how the vote's going to go too.” He referenced another individual who came forward tonight speaking about judgement, but Mr. Olson makes more than \$150,000. He said they'd asked him to give everyone who worked on the Tyler software transition a bonus, but he'd only given four people a bonus. He opined that if you're going to judge people, you should judge everyone the same. He offered that those dissenting voices should try to run for Council like Councilman Brooks said if they think they can do better.

Councilman Horton asked Attorney Morgan if another motion could be made while a motion was on the floor. Mr. Morgan said certain substantive motions could. Councilman Horton stated that small town politics had shown him how tricky things could get. He realized that Council and employees were underpaid, but we had a small number of Councilors. It's one thing to serve on Council and realize the demands. They may say it's what you signed up for, but I think every person on here is worth that increase. He said it appalled him when he read the memo for this item because he felt like staff had attempted to create a document showing how much Council makes in comparison to other towns in order to embarrass them. He said he felt that \$500 was not enough for all that they did, so they needed to analyze that. Based on the information shared that they could not give themselves a raise, he felt that the motion on the floor to stop talking about it was out of order anyway. "If we were to pass the raise, I guarantee you our Council would receive the raise, even those persons who voted against it, unless they were called out." He reiterated that he did not feel that \$500 a month was not enough and he said that he was not going to be moved by constituents coming forward on the issue. "If you don't like what we do, you get off your butt, you come run for Council. You come receive phone calls all night, emails all night, be talked about, be crucified in The Daily Disappointment and then you have a right to come stand up here and voice your opinion." He noted that he'd received quite a few phone calls about this, but he was not moved by it and he felt that the Council deserved the raise and then some.

Councilman Caudle said he'd like to go on record stating he was against a raise for the Council. Based on the information they'd received, it was clear they could not vote themselves a raise outside of the budget ordinance, was that correct? Mr. Olson said it was, but if they so decided they did want the raise, they would have to direct him through the budget process.

Councilman Brooks said he was in all the wards trying to help everybody. If somebody doesn't want the raise, they should donate it to the Food Bank or another non-profit. He chastised Council for trying to micromanage themselves by refusing to talk about a topic just because a few people show up and are upset about something.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he didn't know what the city manager was doing that no one was coming up and talking about him, but they should be.

Motion was withdrawn by Councilman Chris Ruffieux, seconded by Councilwoman Jeannie Young.

Motion was made by Councilman Chris Ruffieux, seconded by Councilwoman Jeannie Young to take no further action regarding a salary increase for City Council at this time. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Spence, Brooks, Walton, Young, Horton, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

i. Veterans Experience Action Center (As Added by Councilman Michael Brooks);

Councilman Brooks briefed the Council on the upcoming VEAC in June, which would be held at ECSU. He asked that the manager make sure we help get this information out to our veterans, particularly those who may be homeless.

j. Inmate Service Agreement (As Added by Councilman Michael Brooks);

Councilman Brooks said he noticed when he was absent the Council moved forward with the inmate agreement, even after his argument as to why we should not. He stated that it felt like we were voting money over safety. He said when we had the program before, we had a lot of problems and it was important to remember that our employees are not trained correctional officers. He said another of his concerns was with the coronavirus and there was a period of time that sanitizer was considered contraband for inmates. Councilman Spence noted there was now a type they were able to use that did not contain alcohol. Councilman Brooks reiterated that having city employees supervise inmates was not wise or safe.

Councilman Spence said he lived through the terrible breakout attempt in 2017. Many things had changed since then. He said the dorms and cells are cleaned and sanitized daily against coronavirus, so that wasn't very likely. He added that these offenders who

worked in the city would be hand-picked and “on their way home.” Yes, some might get irate and be hot-tempered, but we probably have employees who behave the same way. He said he felt safe having them work for the city, and he would appreciate us not using the incident in which he lost his friends and co-workers in 2017 as a reason not to use inmates.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he did voice his opinion and he didn't like using the inmates either. He asked where the salary savings number came from. Mr. Olson explained that we only paid the inmates \$1 a day, whereas we are paying most employees \$15 an hour plus a benefits package. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said we should just hire more people. Mr. Olson said he did not have the budget to hire more people, but he would provide him a write-up on the exact salary savings numbers.

7. Comments and Inquiries on Non-Agenda Items:

Councilman Adkins had no further comments.

Councilman Caudle had no further comments.

Councilman Horton had no further comments.

Councilwoman Young thanked the community for coming to speak and encouraged them to come more often. She noted that some of the sentiments members of the Council may have expressed towards them tonight were not felt by the entirety of the Council, and she was very appreciative that they'd come to attend in spite of the unprofessional behavior they may have witnessed. She urged the Council to take a moment to think about the fact that people are watching us, they see our actions, they hear how we speak to our staff. She asked that we try to be more respectful to one another and to the staff. She worried that some of the decisions being made on Council might water down the future candidates who will run for office. She stated that being a member of Council should not be a way to supplement your income or have health insurance, and it might lower the quality of candidate who will run for seats when we do things like that. She pointed out that we are struggling to meet the needs of our employees and citizens as it is.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said we had a staff member who'd worked here for more than 20 years and had been run off by a director and no one said anything. He said he was angry with the bigotry and the poor treatment of people. If a person is going to become an informant, everything the city manager wants some people to do, that's what they'll do. We are the owners and we can't do what we're supposed to do because someone is always running back to the city manager with something. He reiterated his concern about only four people getting a bonus when it took an entire group of people to get Tyler going. He said that it was all about trying to control the four boys. He mentioned that two of them were in a picture when another Councilor. He referenced a memo written to the manager which detailed “a light-skinned female” asking a police officer to intervene in a so-called heated discussion. The memo detailed that there did not appear to be any problem between three councilors, which were himself, Councilman Brooks and Councilwoman Young, but afterwards the “light-skinned female” appeared highly upset and dramatic and approached Councilwoman Young and advised her that she was on the phone with the city manager and assistant city manager. He wondered why the newspaper then said that the police officer had to escort Councilwoman Young to the car if that wasn't the case. He admitted that the conversation between himself, Councilman Brooks and Councilwoman Young had gotten somewhat loud, but he and Councilman Brooks had held their poise. He said he felt the newspaper would put it a different way tomorrow, but that's what happened. He opined that we won't be a body that does anything good for Elizabeth City if they're all out checking with the city manager. He reiterated that the Councilors are the owners. He detailed a Finance Committee meeting in which he asked the Finance Director for a document and was told that she would get it for him the next day because she was going home. “I can't be the owner because I'm being treated like that. I'm not tolerating this stuff. I'm not being kicked anymore. If I'm the owner and I've got to raise my hand, he should have to raise his hand too.” He said he felt the city had too much poison and too many informants.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton to have everyone who worked with the Tyler conversion to receive \$200, effective with their next

paycheck. Additionally, everyone who helped with the Senior Center should also receive \$200. The motion was seconded by Councilman Darius Horton.

Mayor Parker asked Attorney Morgan if this was a motion that was in order at this time. Mr. Morgan said this was something that would need to appear before the Finance Committee, and we would have to bring forward a budget amendment to pay for it as well. He said he believed the Council would need to allow for the agenda to be amended for the motion to be made at this time.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he'd given the city manager a directive that anytime we were going to be involved with a program, it should be brought to the Council and yet he did not bring the inmate agreement forward. He said he was now giving the city manager a directive to have a monthly report delivered to him and the rest of the Council detailing all checks and credit card receipts.

Councilman Brooks said we keep hearing how many people are leaving Elizabeth City and he was researching the reasons why. He asked that the cameras be viewed and if we saw an abundance of people in certain areas that we have police do a drive through.

Councilman Ruffieux had no further comments.

Councilman Spence had no further comments.

Mayor Parker noted that the Senior Center grand opening had recently happened and many citizens had been in attendance and were so happy with the new facility.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker adjourned the meeting at 10:21 p.m.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley
City Clerk