

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

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in regular session on Monday, November 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
Councilwoman Jeannie Young
Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton
Councilman Kem Spence
Councilman Darius Horton

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilman Michael Brooks
Councilman Chris Ruffieux

OTHERS PRESENT: Interim City Manager Ralph Clark
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Interim Chief of Police Larry James
Electric Superintendent Jason Value
Human Resources Director Montique McClary
Public Utilities Director Dwan Bell
Fire Chief Chris Carver
Community Development Director Kellen Long
ECDI Director Debbie Malenfant
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark
IT Director Matthew Simpson
IT Systems Analyst Pedro Holley II
Deputy City Clerk Doris Walton
City Clerk April Onley

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 Spence to give the invocation, after which everyone joined in for the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval:

Mayor Parker asked the Council's pleasure on the presented agenda.

Councilman Spence requested that a discussion on sidewalks be added to the Regular Agenda.

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle, seconded by Councilwoman Jeannie Young to approve the agenda as amended. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Walton, Young, Horton and Caudle. 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. Comments from the Public:

There were no public comments.

4. Approval of Minutes:

a. November 8, 2021 – Special Work Session;

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

b. November 8, 2021 – Regular Session;

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

5. Consent Agenda:

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

a. Consideration – Accept FY2021 NC Emergency Management Homeland Security Grant Program Award;

(End of Consent Agenda)

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

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

6. Regular Agenda:

a. Any item Pulled from the Consent Agenda;

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

b. Discussion – Fire Station Location Analysis;

Chief Carver introduced Greg Grayson who was present to guide the Council through the fire station location analysis. His team assists the League of Municipalities as consultants, but also help with strategic planning and various other areas related to fire service. Most of the team is comprised of recently retired fire chiefs in North Carolina. Much of the work is GIS or modeling based, but it is all analyzed by fire professionals to make sure it is best practice. Continuous improvement to advance the system is extremely improvement. Short-term recommendations should feed into long-term needs. In this particular project, they were asked to analyze the GIS modeling, which was a significant portion of the project. Based on that, drive time maps, incident maps, heat maps and more were created with data from up to five years to determine where future incidents may occur. The GIS system analysis gives them a "crystal ball" of predictability based on past incidents. Most fire stations are 40 or 50 year buildings and very expensive to construct, and when one is placed somewhere, you want to make sure you've determined the best place for it to go.

The team was asked to look at six predictive models, both short and long term to fully assess potential needs. They also looked at the insurance rating because the City will soon be reevaluated. The bottom line was to identify the optimal location for station two and determine how to provide the strongest fire service delivery system possible. There are many pieces in the fire continuum, but they were mostly focused on travel time. Most municipalities want to have a travel time in the 90th percentile.

Station two was originally designed as a temporary station, but there are a number of factors affecting that community that have kept it in place and operation. Station one was built in 1974 and there is significant age and wear showing there. There is also a need to have an area for decontamination of equipment, living spaces, gender separation, and so on. There's a large amount of growth in the western part of Elizabeth City, so that's also

something to take into consideration. It is typical that municipalities also serve unincorporated areas as well, which our fire department does.

The analysis determined that emergency incidents are in alignment with our population, and that 90% of emergencies happen within Elizabeth City. The remainder occur in unincorporated areas serviced by the fire department. Currently, 43% of city streets are within 1.5 road miles of one of the two fire stations. The 1.5 is important for our Fire Department's insurance rating. Additionally, 21% of city streets are within 2.5 miles of the ladder truck's location at fire station two. Elizabeth City Fire Department has a travel time of about four minutes or less to 72% of the emergency incidents that it responds to.

He explained the VRI or the Vulnerability Risk Index, which is constructed using input from populations levels, emergency call demand, and land use or hazard risk to develop a score and rank each area of the city. The higher the VRI, the higher the level of service capability. Currently, the City is measured around 30% for VRI for a baseline, but the true measurement is how the residents see the service and how dependent they are on it.

The team was asked to develop six different scenarios to identify optimal fire station locations for Elizabeth City. With the addition of another station and optimization of our current stations, the city could possibly double the current VRI. In one option, if station one was kept where it is and station two was shifted north of its current location, VRI would increase by 7%. Even with Elizabeth City expanding more to the west, there is still a necessity for station two. He noted that North Road Street was given as a long-term option for a future station, as was North Hughes. A third fire station would be suggested in the area of Halstead Boulevard Extended and Thunder Road, near the new medical facilities, and if placed there, would increase VRI an additional 16% beyond the 7% gained from relocating station two. Looking further ahead, it could be a long-term goal to relocate station one closer to ECSU near Weeksville Road, which would add another extra 7% VRI and possibly garner some partnerships.

Manager Clark asked if the Fire Department was adequately staffed for two stations, and how many more personnel we'd need if we moved to three stations. Mr. Grayson noted that most cities tried to plan for 15 people for a new station, but it could be spread over a number of years. He pointed out that there are also grant opportunities that help subsidize the first few years. Fire stations typically take two years to plan and construct, so cities usually add a few new personnel over the course of a few years. Staffing is an important piece when you add a new station. He noted that fire service is very laborious and for planning, you'll need to think of about 15 people. He added that Elizabeth City will decide their level of service. There is not a mandate or requirement beyond what is required by federal law to enter a structure fire, but other staffing is simply a level of service determination. There is an ISO piece that rewards you for the level of service that you have, but it is not a requirement. In recent years, the National Institute of Standards and Technology has performed studies on the effectiveness of fire fighters and it has determined the most effective fire-fighting team is a four-person team. Interior attacks are considered dangerous to life and health and they are governed by different rules.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton noted that this project could take at least two years to construct a new station and this entire body was getting ready to change over and could be brand new. He suggested that this information be passed over to whoever might be on the next Council because it was very important. He felt that the City's grant writer should look into anything that might help us possibly qualifying for some funding.

Chief Carver said he knew that this had been a lot of information, but if anyone had any questions to please let him know in the coming days and he'd provide any answers that he could.

c. Update – Middle School;

Director Malenfant said she was presenting on behalf of a team consisting of the Parks and Recreation Department, the Police Department and PAL, Pasquotank County, City of Elizabeth City, J.D. Lewis Construction, ECDI, the Boys and Girls Club and the SOULS program. This project impacted many stakeholders and had a lot of moving pieces. In November of 2020, an offer to purchase the facility was submitted to Pasquotank County, which was subsequently accepted. Aspects of that purchase agreement included that the buyer convert the location in 84 market rate apartments; the buyer conduct an estimated

10-month due diligence period; the seller negotiate the lease of the gym to the County of another entity; that the buyer commence and complete the project within 36 months after the date of closing; and that the buyer dedicate two specific parcels of land to the City of Elizabeth City Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the buyer must obtain approval for historic landmark status and conditional zoning. Between December 2020 and current, there have been many meetings with the developer and the various stakeholders and staff from both the County and City. In March of 2021, the Council approved dedicated of the complex as an historical landmark. On June 7, 2021, County Commissioners voted to dedicate 12 County-owned parcels behind the gym to Parks and Recreation; contribute \$150,000 to the Boys and Girls Club for rent payments; assist the Boys and Girls Club with temporary relocation; recommend a 20-year lease with the City of Elizabeth City via Parks and Rec for the gym with an option to purchase after five years at a predetermined price; and contribute \$10,000 to SOULS provided they obtain their 501c3. On June 14, 2021, the City Council approve conditional zoning for historic restoration. On August 23, 2021, the Council was provided an email update that the closing date for the purchase had been extended to January 2022. The improvements will begin in early 2022. Also in August 2021, the Boys and Girls Club did temporarily relocate to a County facility. An onsite meeting to discuss "wish list" items was conducted in October 2021.

Director Malenfant noted that there was no request for action at this point. The next step would involve discussion during the joint meeting with Betsy Town Flats. All of the financial information may not be ready at that time, so no action will be requested at that time either. At the City and County's respective December meetings, they will be reviewing leaseback documents. She pointed out that several members of the overall team were present this evening if there were any additional questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked what the status of the Boys and Girls Club was at the current time. Director Malenfant said they are currently located in the Edgewood Shopping Center, but will be working with the County to find a more permanent location. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he would like the County to provide some additional information or answers during the joint meeting.

d. Discussion – Finalize Dates for Developmental Associates / Candidates;

The Clerk advised that she and Mayor Parker had received an email from Holly Danford of Development Associates with two potential dates to begin screening candidates. The first date was December 13th, which is also the date of the single Council meeting in December, which would not be a problem to incorporate them into if the Council saw fit. The other possible date was January 3rd, which would need to be called as a special meeting if they preferred that date.

Mayor Parker noted that generally the Council would have their installation on December 13th, but due to the election being delayed, it would just be a regular meeting, so she saw no problem with that date. Councilman Horton concurred. Councilwoman Young asked what they would be discussing. Manager Clark explained they'd go over the process with the Council and give them some applicants if they had them, as advertisements for the position would have been out around 40 days or so by then.

e. Discussion – Sidewalks (As Added During Agenda Adjustments);

Councilman Spence said he'd received phone calls from residents on River Road who had expressed concern that they could walk to River Road school if there were sidewalks, but they're not able to do so because it's apparently against the law to walk over it as they stand now. The people across the street are not allowed to walk to school because they don't have a crosswalk. Councilwoman Young said Representative Howard Hunter talked to her last week about extra money in the state budget and asked her what Elizabeth City might need. She relayed that she'd told him we really needed sidewalks because it was dangerous for the kids trying to walk, and we especially needed them going to the university. Representative Hunter has now put in the state's budget another \$600,000 for us, \$200,000 of which is for sidewalks. Manager Clark noted that he saw it in the paper and it's "very close to being real now." Councilwoman Young said she wanted to publicly thank Representative Hunter for working so hard to help our city get what we desperately needed.

7. Comments and Inquiries on Non-Agenda Items:

Councilman Spence stated that he'd recently seen an email come through about the Christmas party for staff. He noted that they'd budgeted for gift cards and not the luncheon – do we have money for both? Should we make an amendment? Manager Clark said we will have to have a budget amendment. Councilman Spence said he needed these answers because if we're going to do an amendment, he felt that it should have been done beforehand. He asked if we'd already secured the catering for the event. Manager Clark said he believed that we had. Councilman Spence pointed out that this was a complaint with the previous city manager because he didn't do things in order. This should have been on the agenda tonight. If we've already scheduled this and gotten the cards, we've done things out of order once again. Manager Clark said he agreed, but he didn't know the luncheon was important until the last meeting. He said there was ample savings in the budget to pay for the luncheon.

Mayor Parker asked for clarification on whether or not an amendment should have been made. Manager Clark confirmed that one would need to be made and it technically should have been made tonight, but it was quite short notice. It would come forward during the next meeting. He added that this wasn't the only budget amendment that hadn't come forward. Councilman Spence said he was fine it, but he wanted to bring it up and make sure things were in order.

Councilman Caudle had no further comments.

Councilman Horton had no further comments.

Councilwoman Young wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and thanked Mr. Clark for putting the holiday luncheon together for staff. She was glad the Council had given the direction to have the party.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said he hadn't thought of it the way Councilman Spence said it, but it made sense. He asked who was doing the catering. Manager Clark said he wasn't sure, Mrs. Walton was scheduling and coordinating those items. Mayor Pro Tem Walton said there was an issue with COVID last year and there still was. He noted that Mr. Clark hadn't brought back information about where the City's financial situation stood. Mr. Clark asked if he'd like him to drop the other things he'd been working on to do that. Mayor Pro Tem Walton replied that he was trying to keep the conversation civil. He said we didn't need to do amendments to make the audit correct. We needed to stop doing amendments unless we were doing it the right way.

Mayor Parker gave an update on COVID. The pandemic is still here, but we're making strides and combating the illness and surge. She read an update from Albemarle Regional Health Services, and advised of the availability of appointments for children 5-11, as well as adults interested in receiving their initial shots and boosters. She also noted that ECSU would be offering COVID vaccines at the KE White Graduate Center on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

8. Adjournment:

Mayor Parker called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young, seconded by Councilman Kem Spence. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Walton, Young, Horton and Caudle. Against: None. Motion carried.

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley, NCCMC
City Clerk

