

City Council Rescheduled Budget Work Session
April 26, 2021
Rescheduled May 3, 2021

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in a rescheduled budget work session on Monday, May 3, 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
Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton
Councilman Billy Caudle
Councilman Michael Brooks
Councilman Gabriel Adkins
Councilman Chris Ruffieux
Councilman Darius Horton

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilwoman Darius Horton

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Montre' Freeman
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Finance Director Evelyn Benton
Public Safety Director Eddie Buffaloe
Deputy Chief of Police James Avens
Interim Electric Superintendent Bob Vannoy
Human Resources Director Montique McClary
Public Utilities Director Dwan Bell
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark
Grants Administrator Jon Hawley
Fire Chief Chris Carver
IT Director Matthew Simpson
City Clerk April Onley
Deputy City Clerk / Executive Admin Doris Walton

The City Council Work Session was called to order by Mayor Parker at 5:30 p.m. The invocation was provided, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Parker gave a statement of recognition regarding the funeral of Andrew Brown.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval

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

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Chris Ruffieux. 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 interests regarding items on the presented agenda were made.

3. Presentation - ElectriCities;

Mayor Parker yielded to City Manager Freeman to begin the discussion. Manager Freeman explained that representatives from ElectriCities were on the line for a brief presentation. Mr. Fusco and Mr. Rehm advised that ElectriCities' purpose is delivering public power to communities through strength, wisdom, and action while promoting a successful future for our citizens. Mr. Fusco said that all public power utilities share five elements, including public ownership, local control, nonprofit operation, low-cost structure and they are customer-focused. Mr. Rehm advised the Council of their members services, including energy education and support, career and development and safety and training,

amongst other things. He stated that Elizabeth City would be participating in the 2021 retail customer survey, which focuses on customer perception of the utility, customer service satisfaction and interest. They will expect to send over the results sometime in August and they will share those in detail with the Council.

4. Presentation – Enterprise Funds;

Director Benton advised that the amount of outstanding debt in the Enterprise Fund was \$2,110,303. The debt payment for FY 2021-2022 would be \$747,159, which was an increase of \$141,331. She stated that not much had changed as far as our revenue was concerned. We were expecting about \$32,637,600 from energy sales and \$450,000 in late fees, which was average for our operation. The cost for the City's purchase of power is expected to run \$24,350,000. She advised that the amount of funding available to run the department is \$9,204,100. She said there was a slight increase in non-departmental budgets. Likewise, the Customer Service expenses are projected to decrease in FY 2022, although budgeted positions will remain the same. Load management was also proposing a decrease of roughly \$15,000 in costs.

Councilman Ruffieux noted that in the original spreadsheet there was mention of a full-time position addition; had that been removed? Director Benton said that had, as well as the request for the Ford truck.

Director Benton advised that the Stormwater Fund had mostly stayed the same. There was no decrease in payment, as we were still paying for the Roanoke project. The Solid Waste Fund will have a decrease in outstanding debt in the amount of \$19,388 due to the pay-off of a leaf truck. She added that we have budgeted \$115,000 for recycling fees. Manager Freeman said that he was having Director Bell work on a master plan, which was a daunting project. He was beginning with the Stormwater Advisory board, but this would be something strategic that would eventually need to be looked at across the organization.

Director Benton said at the present time, nothing has been budgeted for rate increases, but she did want the Council to consider some suggestions that were given by Raftelis that she'd come across when she was reviewing the study. Manager Freeman noted that there was an extreme strain on our infrastructure and it was growing all the time. The growth that has already happened, not even considering the growth that is coming, we can't handle it now. Director Benton said she suggested a 2% water increase this year and a 3% sewer increase, plus the other half of the 25% sewer increase that should have originally been adopted the previous year, which would be 28% total. She said that on a 5,000 gallon per month bill with a current fee of \$49.94, the 2% increase would bring the bill to \$50.95 for water. An average sewer user with 5,000 and a current fee of \$36.07 would now be paying \$44.56 with a 28% increase.

Motion was made by Councilman Chris Ruffieux to continue this discussion the following week. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jeannie Young. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Ruffieux, Brooks, Walton, Young, Caudle and Adkins. Against: None. Motion carried.

4. Adjournment:

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley
City Clerk, NCCMC