

**City Council Special Work Session  
November 8, 2021**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in a special work session on Monday, November 8, 2021 in the EC-PC Senior Center, located at 215 South Water Street, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Bettie Parker  
Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton  
Councilman Billy Caudle  
Councilman Kem Spence  
Councilman Michael Brooks  
Councilman Chris Ruffieux  
Councilman Darius Horton (*Arrived at 5:47 p.m.*)  
Councilwoman Jeannie Young

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Interim City Manager Ralph Clark  
Parks and Recreation Director Sean Clark  
Community Development Director Kellen Long  
ECDI Director Debbie Malenfant  
IT Director Matthew Simpson  
IT Systems Analyst Pedro Holley II  
City Clerk April Onley  
Deputy City Clerk Doris Walton

Mayor Parker called the City Council Special Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m. Invocation was given, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval:**

**Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Councilman Billy Caudle, seconded by Councilman Chris Ruffieux. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Walton, Caudle, Spence, Brooks, Young, Ruffieux. Against: None. Motion carried.**

**2. Statement of Disclosure:**

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

**3. Presentation / Discussion – Redistricting;**

Mayor Parker advised that there would be a Regular Session following this meeting, which was set to begin at 7:00 p.m. She said she would like to begin transitioning to that meeting around 6:30 p.m., as we'd need adequate time to relocate to Council Chambers. With that, she turned the meeting over to Community Development Director Kellen Long and Poyner Spruill.

Director Long recapped the redistricting process thus far. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, the initial overview from Poyner Spruill was presented to the Council, which explained the principles behind redistricting, which included the importance of "one person, one vote." When the census data was provided, it showed that wards two and four were outside of the permissible range of population, with ward two being 19% over the range and ward four being 23% below the range. Since wards two and four were not beside each other, all four wards would be affected when drafting the changes. Director Long explained that two alternatives had been drafted for consideration based on several guidelines provided by the Council. A resolution was adopted with the Council's requisite guidelines for

Poyner Spruill to follow when drafting their maps. A public hearing was held on October 25<sup>th</sup>. Maps were provided online and in hard copy format in various locations for public review. She noted that she had only received one comment to date regarding the maps.

Tara Bright from Poyner Spruill advised that she was present to answer any questions that the Council or the public may have regarding the maps. She reminded the Council that the filing deadline was on November 17<sup>th</sup>, so in the event that either alternative was not adopted tonight, we would likely need to call for an additional special meeting in order to meet that deadline.

Mayor Parker asked the Clerk if any members of the public were present tonight who wished to speak. Upon the Clerk's response that there was one, the Mayor asked that they be called to the podium.

**Holly Audette – 609 West Main Street** – Ms. Audette said that she had a concern about the student population. She noted she'd asked Ms. Long about whether students were included and was told that they were not likely in town when the census was conducted. Since they're allowed to vote during the election but their numbers were not included, or included to a very minimal degree during this process, she'd like to know how we intended to deal with that since we did have three facilities of higher learning and that could definitely sway an election.

Ms. Bright replied that unfortunately, the census data we received is what we were stuck with when considering redistricting; however, we did consider future population growth as a guideline, so those students may be accounted for to some degree in that way.

As no further members of the present public had comments, Mayor Parker asked Director Long to share the comment she'd received in the input box. Ms. Long said the single comment she'd received was via a public input form from Karen Hollowell. Ms. Hollowell had filled in that there was "too much crime" but did not leave any additional comments.

Councilwoman Young asked if it would be alright if she addressed Ms. Audette regarding her question. Mayor Parker agreed that it would be permissible in this forum. Councilwoman Young asked Ms. Audette if the response from Poyner Spruill had satisfied her inquiry. Ms. Audette said she believed it was a reasonable answer, but it did not solve the problem. Ms. Audette said ECSU, for example, was growing and we're looking at 3,500 or more students. If this ward has this many people come forward to vote who were not included in the redistricting, this could cause a problem. To not include that consideration when you're trying to equal out and balance numbers in a ward is a problem. She concurred that the deviation allowance makes some adjustment towards that, but almost an identical number of people added to an election that are not considered in the original breakdown of a ward, the consideration of future growth will not take care of that amount of change.

Councilwoman Young asked Ms. Bright if she'd put a 5% increase in the plan. Ms. Bright said the census data could be challenged, but to the extent that it's not already been challenged, we are stuck with the data that's been released. She said that we'd accounted for it the best we could, but we are stuck with what was counted in April 2020, absent a challenge.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said maybe everyone wasn't keeping up with everything as we went forward, but that was one of the criteria we looked at to deal with something like this. We voted to do it the way it's being done. He pointed out that you never can know when an explosion will be, so there could be a decrease in numbers too. He said that someone could try to do away with ECSU in 10 years. He reminded the Council that they had voted to go with this criteria, so that's why they are where they are.

#### **4. Adjournment:**

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker asked for a vote to adjourn the meeting.

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

Mayor Parker declared the meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

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Bettie J. Parker  
Mayor

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April D. Onley  
City Clerk, NCCMC