

**City Council Work Session
August 24, 2015**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in work session on Monday, August 24, 2015 in Council Chambers, located on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Administration Building, 306 E. Colonial Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Joe Peel
Councilwoman Jean Baker (*arrived at 5:34 p.m.*)
Councilman Ray Donnelly
Mayor Pro Tem Anita Hummer
Councilman Tony Stimatz
Councilman Darius Horton (*arrived at 5:50 p.m.*)
Councilman Johnnie Walton

MEMBER ABSENT: Councilman Michael Brooks
Councilman Kem Spence

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Rich Olson
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Finance Director Sarah Blanchard
Planning Director June Brooks
Chief of Police Eddie Buffaloe
Electric Department Superintendent Karl Clow
Assistant to the City Manager Angela Cole
Human Resources Director Katherine Felton
Public Utilities Director Paul Fredette
Energy Officer Dennis Gordon
ECDI Director Wade Nichols
IT Director Matthew Simpson
Parks and Recreation Director Bobbi White
City Clerk Vivian White

The City Council work session was called to order by Mayor Joe Peel at 5:30 p.m. Mayor Peel welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave the invocation, after which he led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval:

Mayor Peel called for any adjustments to and approval of the agenda.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Anita Hummer, seconded by Councilman Tony Stimatz, to approve the agenda as presented with any necessary adjustments. Those voting in favor were: Donnelly, Hummer, Stimatz and Walton. Against: None. The motion carried unanimously. (*Baker and Horton had not yet arrived.*)

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 – Northeastern Workforce Development - Cathy Davison, Executive Director:

Mayor Peel welcomed Cathy Davison, Executive Director, Emily Nicholson, Business Services and Economic Development Manager and Lora Aples, Youth Program Manager, all representing the Albemarle Commission.

Mayor Peel stated that he had requested this item be placed on the agenda because it involves something that he has been working on for the last ten months. He said that a Job Training and Entrepreneurship Committee suggested by Ms. Lena Council came out of the Vision 2020 initiative, which brought about the current workforce training focus. He reported that he had spent a lot of time over the previous eighteen months talking to business people in the community, Workforce Development representatives and the local Small Business Centers about developing workforce training. He advised that this initiative came about at a good time, since the workforce agencies were being “re-missionized” from the state’s unemployment agency; while at the same time training space became available in the Hugh Cale Center.

Mayor Peel stated that he had learned in his discussions with business people that there exists a need to improve the soft skills of people who were applying for employment as well as a need to find people qualified to be managers and assistant managers. He said that because of this need, the mission took off in two directions with Ms. Aples locating a program called “Working Smart” that focuses on training for soft skills in the workplace and the COA and ECSU Small Business Centers developing a series of courses for businesses to send top employees to develop leadership skills in order to move up through the ranks of their businesses.

Mayor Peel reported that he had spent four or five weeks visiting businesses and getting them to agree that if someone had a certificate from the Work Ready Program, they would guarantee them an interview. He stated that so far, over 25 businesses had signed up to participate. Mayor Peel stated that all of this work is being done in order to improve the skill level of the local workforce and help those in need to find jobs and better employment.

Mayor Peel recognized Ms. Davison to begin their presentation.

Ms. Davison provided an overview of the Albemarle Commission for the City Council and described its mission to serve its ten member counties as enhancing the quality of life for residents and providing direct services to businesses. She advised that the Agency provided these services through the Northeast Workforce Development Board, the Area Agency on Aging, the Senior Nutrition Program and the Rural Planning Organization. She noted that the Agency also serves as the administrator for the Federal Economic Development Office as well as single family home rehabilitation services through the State North Carolina for individuals who are elderly, disabled and below 80% of the median income level. She reported that in the past year \$140,000 in services for home rehab had been provided in Pasquotank County alone.

Using a PowerPoint slide presentation, Ms. Nicholson introduced the ACT Certified Work Ready Community program for the Council and stated that the program had been made possible by the Albemarle Commission’s close relationship with the College of the Albemarle. She reported that the Work Ready Initiative is sponsored by ACT, which is a test provider for high school students. She stated that Pasquotank County would be the first county in Northeastern North Carolina to obtain the status as a Work Ready Community. She described a Certified Work Ready Community (WRC) as a county-based application that depends on three core elements: graduation rates, Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) goals and business commitment. She said that of the ten counties served by the Albemarle Commission, Pasquotank County is ideal to begin the program given its graduation rates and the CRC attainment levels that have already been established.

Ms. Nicholson reported that critical to obtaining business commitment is stakeholder involvement. She stated that a Steering Committee of stakeholders had been formed and had already met that included representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, economic development, elected officials, education, the community college and local Workforce Development. She stated that Pasquotank County’s goal for business commitment includes 48 businesses, which she thought was an attainable goal. She said that it would be the responsibility of the Steering Committee to locate and recruit the businesses.

Ms. Nicholson described the Career Readiness Certification as a nationwide industry recognized skill-based credential that measures workers' skills in applied math, reading for information and locating information. She pointed out that a CRC readiness level would be an important indicator for businesses looking to locate in Pasquotank County, no matter the industry size or scope. She noted that the training is applicable for the current workforce, those transitioning, such as veterans, and the emerging student workforce.

Ms. Nichols stated that attainment of Work Ready Community status is a strong economic development tool.

Ms. Aples provided a PowerPoint presentation for the Council to introduce the "Working Smart" soft skills training program for workplace success. She reported that the program had been developed by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board and its partners. She stated that it had been found that some of the skills missing in today's workforce include analyzing problems, communicating, work ethic and team building, even though people can be trained to perform a certain task. She advised that the program was developed to integrate work skills and life skills in order to develop a better all-around worker. She stated that in her work with young people, she had found that the things most people would consider as common-sense are not always normal or common-sense to them.

Ms. Aples provided an overview of each of the five modules of the Working Smart Program and the 16 interactive lessons in those modules. She described the modules as: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Work Ethics, Communication Skills and Problem Solving Skills. She noted that Albemarle Commission began teaching classes for this program in April 2015. She stated that the program is relevant to job seekers as well as incumbent workers and is free of charge to both students and businesses that wish to participate.

Councilman Stimatz inquired if the Working Smart program provided a certificate upon completion like the Career Readiness Certification. Ms. Aples responded that the certificate provided is not nationally recognized like the CRC, but the originators of the program are working to get the program recognized in North Carolina and beyond.

Councilman Walton inquired how the Albemarle Commission representatives are paid. Ms. Davison responded that funding is received from the State of North Carolina based on the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, which was adopted in July 2014 and went into effect on July 1, 2015. She said that the Commission works as a conduit for workforce development solutions for the State of North Carolina Department of Commerce. She noted that training certifications are at no cost to the communities or to businesses, because they are recognized as the Northeastern Workforce Development Board. She stated that the Albemarle Commission serves as the Region R Council of Government as enabled by 1969 General Assembly legislation.

4. Presentation – Weatherization Program Review and Update – Dennis Gordon, Energy Officer:

Mayor Peel recognized City Manager Olson for a review of this item. Mr. Olson stated that there had been a lot of discussion over the last few months regarding the City's weatherization program. He said that he thought it would be advantageous for Energy Officer Dennis Gordon to provide an update on the program to clear up any misconceptions that may exist for the Council members.

Mr. Olson turned the presentation over to Mr. Gordon by announcing that he has been the City's Energy Officer for the past eight years and has grown the program from its inception. He said that Mr. Gordon is one of the most highly certified weatherization people in the state and teaches classes and speaks on the subject.

Mr. Gordon provided a series of PowerPoint slides for the Council members. Mr. Gordon stated that it is extremely important that people understand what their homes are saying to them when asking heating and cooling equipment to do a particular job.

He pointed out that if the home cannot retain the temperature set by the homeowner, then the heating and cooling equipment will not shut off, thus leading to high utility bills. He stated that “weatherization is what makes it work.” He described weatherization as cost-effective, energy efficiency measures and pointed out that these energy efficiency measures are free to the City’s utility customers. He advised that when energy-efficiency measures are considered, they concern things that will encompass the building envelope – or the ability to keep inside the house actually what is being put into it. Mr. Gordon reported that during the process, he takes into account heating and cooling equipment as well as the electricity-using appliances that exist in the homes.

Mr. Gordon reported that he began his career nearly 20 years ago at the Economic Improvement Council, which serves a 10-county area. He said that EIC had received funding in the current year to do about 20 houses within its 10-county area.

Mr. Gordon advised that the benefits of weatherization include a reduction in energy bills and short and long term savings for the lifetime of a house. He stated that there is no “hocus-pocus” in the process because scientific equipment is used during the analysis to guide the weatherization measures performed on homes. He reported that the program is free of charge to all City utility customers through an application process. He said that proof of income and proof of ownership is collected during the application process even though it is not considered as a qualifier for the program.

Mr. Gordon discussed the budget history of the program and noted that in the early years the entire appropriated budget had not been expended. He stated that the reason the funds were not used was due to barriers built into the weatherization assistance program that were not anticipated. He said that the biggest barrier was income guidelines because the City was following the federal program requirement that recipients had to be 250% below the poverty guideline in order to qualify. He advised that owner-occupied homes that met that guideline were only about 7 – 8% of the City’s housing stock; and of those, only 5 – 7% were suitable enough to do weatherization measures. He stated that weatherization is not a remodeling program and pointed out that there is a tremendous difference between remodeling and weatherization.

Mr. Gordon stated that since the Council eliminated income guidelines to participate in the program, the City had been able to expend almost all funding that has been allocated on an annual basis. He pointed out that most of the people that have been served have still been at or below the federal poverty guidelines; and he made the point that the City is truly helping those that are of low to median income.

Mr. Gordon reviewed the process for the program and stated that citizens must complete an education certification and complete an application and liability waiver before the energy audit assessment begins. He described the assessment process for the home’s analysis and advised that blower door technology is used to run a depressurization test on the home. He stated that the results of this test guide him in determining the weatherization measures selected for a particular home. He noted that the pre-blower door reading provides the air infiltration percentage and lets him know the cubic feet of air per minute that is leaking from the home. He stated that this reading is compared to the post-blower door reading once weatherization measures have been completed. He pointed out that there is no guesswork in the process, because he uses a scientific formula to determine how tight the house can be made.

Mr. Gordon thanked the Council for allowing the presentation and asked for questions from the members.

Councilman Donnelly inquired as to the number of contractors currently being used to do the weatherization work. Mr. Gordon responded that currently the City only has one contractor and stated that he expected to expand that number.

Councilman Horton stated that he noted \$151,000 of the \$160,000 budget was used the previous year leaving \$9,000 of the allocation. He inquired of Mr. Gordon if there were applications waiting to be completed. Mr. Gordon stated that since the money was not his, he tried very hard to be a good steward of the Council’s budget allocation. He said

he would not make a decision to over-spend his budget. He stated that he did have people waiting for weatherization services at the end of the budget year, but he did not want to go over his budget. Mr. Gordon stated that he currently has approximately 50 applications in the queue and applications continue to come in daily.

Hearing no further questions, Mayor Peel thanked Mr. Gordon for his presentation and for the job he is doing.

5. Presentation – Proposed New City Entrance Signs:

Mayor Peel recognized Mr. Olson to provide background for this discussion.

Mr. Olson stated that one of the items included in the Elizabeth City Downtown Plan was to address downtown entrance signs. He said that the existing signs were installed in the early 1990s and were constructed of wood. He reported that because of deterioration, only one of the signs remained.

He said that the consideration before the Council is to determine the type of entrance sign that is desired as well as to decide on the appropriate places to install them. Using PowerPoint slides, Mr. Olson showed the proposed design that staff had created. He pointed out that the proposed design features some of Elizabeth City's historic heritage by including the date of incorporation, and the words "historic Elizabeth City." He stated that the City's newest designation as a Coast Guard City had also been included by use of the City-designed medallion along with the words "Coast Guard City." Mr. Olson pointed out that the design of the sign is a fairly large structure, 22 feet in length and 11.5 feet in height. He reported that because of the weather in Elizabeth City, the sign had to be engineered to make certain it can withstand a 135 mph wind load. In response to a question by Councilman Stimatz, Mr. Olson stated that the sign would most likely include up-lighting.

Councilman Walton inquired as to who came up with the proposed sign wording. Mr. Olson responded that it was staff's proposal. Councilman Walton asked if Councilman Stimatz had suggested the use of "Coast Guard City." Mr. Olson responded that it was not Councilman Stimatz' suggestion; but had been included because the City had worked ten years to accomplish the designation. Councilman Walton asked "what happened to the Harbor of Hospitality." Mr. Olson responded that Harbor of Hospitality is something that has been used by the downtown area predominantly and staff did not think it was appropriate for entrance signs. He said that staff had looked at signs in other jurisdictions to see what they had done to promote their community.

Mr. Olson provided a map that depicted four possible locations for the signs: one at Causeway Park, one at 17 Business/17 Bypass to the south, one north of the Halstead Connector on the bypass and one on 17 North by the NCDOT office. He advised that some issues exist with the locations that will need to be addressed.

Mr. Olson stated that staff is asking for direction regarding the concept being proposed and suggested that the aged brick being proposed ties in with the historical nature of the City.

Councilman Stimatz stated that he thought it was an excellent start and suggested that if "Coast Guard City" is going to be used, the sign should state "a Coast Guard City." He said he thought the signs looked good and he would look forward to seeing them.

Councilman Horton stated that the brick with the City logo was beautiful. He said that he had a problem with the use of "Coast Guard City" because he felt the City had more to offer. He reported that when he travels throughout the country and says that he is from Elizabeth City, from an African-American standpoint, the first thing people associate with the City is Elizabeth City State University. He said that he personally would like to see something on the signs for Elizabeth City State University. He stated that he had recently held a meeting at the university and the students had expressed concern that there was not a lot of signage about the university in the City.

Mr. Olson asked if Councilman Horton would be interested in splitting the signs, with some indicating "Coast Guard City" and some indicating "home of Elizabeth City State University." Councilman Horton stated that he thought they should be generic, because if the City singles out one entity, it would become a problem. Mr. Olson said that he did not disagree; but he pointed out that the Coast Guard Base is the largest economic engine for all of Northeastern North Carolina and employs almost 3,000 people. He stated that ECSU has its own entrance sign on Herrington Road and Weeksville Road. Councilman Horton stated the he still felt the City needed more signage to help make the students and the university feel they are more welcome in the City.

Councilwoman Baker stated that she liked the historic nature of the sign, because the City is obviously a very historic place with six historic districts. She said that there was a lot that the City had been blessed with in the whole historic genre. She stated that she did not feel that it was appropriate to single out one institute of higher education because it would point to something else that had not been highlighted. She said that she felt that since the Coast Guard is such a large employer and is defense for the entire country, it was very important to highlight the City as a "Coast Guard City." She pointed out that it is astounding when you look into the City's history and find all the amazing things that have happened here and continue to happen here. She stated that people come to Elizabeth City just for the historic tourism aspect.

Councilman Stimatz stated that his "gut reaction" when he first saw the sign was "where is Tree City?" He said that he tends to fall in line with Councilman Horton that the sign should be left generic. He stated that the City could determine a tag line later if it chose to do so. He said that he likes the sign design and if "1783 historic Elizabeth City" is the only thing on the sign, he thought it was classy, simple and to the point.

Councilman Walton stated that there are so many variables, he thought it would be nice to let the people decide. He said that the Council and staff members were not enough people to decide on something that would last 40 to 50 years.

Councilman Stimatz asked if the City Manager needed a motion. Mr. Olson responded that he had general direction that the Council wants to forget the tag line and increase the font sizes for "historic Elizabeth City." He advised that staff would now need to get hard prices on the signs and address exact locations and what needs to be done to place the signs at the particular locations.

Councilwoman Baker inquired about the current sign located on the Camden Causeway that contains the various organization signs. She stated that if that sign was going to be relocated, it could incorporate a lot of the other issues that had been discussed. Mr. Olson agreed and said that the City had disks for Tree City and other organizations. He said he thought that sign will be moved closer to the Pasquotank River Bridge on property the City already owns.

6. Discussion/Consideration – Criteria for All Non-profits that Receive City Funding:

Mayor Peel asked City Manager Olson to comment on this item. Mr. Olson stated that during the June 22, 2015 Council meeting, Councilman Stimatz had requested that this item be brought back for discussion to determine what needs to be done to make sure organizations with a budget earmark provide the same sort of documentation that is required of Community Support Grant recipients.

He stated that staff had included a number of items in the staff write-up that would accomplish that goal. He detailed the requirements as follows:

- a. Copy of the organization's Constitution and By-Laws (if not already on file);
- b. Copy of the organization's IRS Letter of Determination certifying federal tax-exempt status (if not already on file);
- c. Current List of Officers and members of Board of Directors;

- d. Submission of invoice to the City's Finance Director requesting the annual appropriation, to include an explanation regarding how the agency plans to use the funding;
- e. Copy of annual audit, including the management letter.
- f. Written fiscal year-end report to the City Council detailing utilization of City funds by the agency from July 1 to June 30. The report shall be submitted on or before July 30 of each year.

Mr. Olson stated that these requirements are somewhat less than the Community Support Grant requirements, but since the requirements are for earmarks, the Council has an understanding regarding the activities of Hopeline and Arts of the Albemarle.

Councilman Stimatz stated that his concern is that the City has virtually no oversight over the 501c3 Police Athletic League, which receives \$55,000 in support. He said that staff can say that the City does not provide direct funding to the organization, but \$55,000 of the citizen's money goes to support that operation.

Mr. Olson stated that the City gives no money to the 501c3. He said that the \$55,000 is in the Police Department budget and is spent by the Police Department. Councilman Stimatz stated that he understood that, but still has a problem that the City is spending \$32,000 on electricity; and it is not clear to him what that amount keeps open. He said that was no different than AoA or Hopeline, in his opinion. He suggested that if the 501c3 was not going to tell the Council what they are getting for that dollar, then City staff should certainly do it. He said what he does see is those "cute little golf carts running around that are paid for with City monies." He stated that the budget had gone from \$35,000 to \$55,000 in one year with no justification. Councilman Stimatz pointed out that the City had paid for the floor in the gym that caught everyone by surprise.

Councilman Stimatz stated that the criteria that had been presented by staff was acceptable for the earmarks, but he still wanted a little more sense of where the money goes for the PAL program.

Mr. Olson stated that the golf carts were donated to the 501c3 from federal surplus and the City had paid for the equipment to make them street legal.

Mayor Peel asked Council's pleasure regarding this request.

Mr. Olson stated that staff would need to provide more documentation during next year's budget to highlight those items in the PAL budget for the Council. He stated that he thought the Council would agree that the City is receiving value for the money spent.

Motion was made by Councilman Tony Stimatz, seconded by Councilman Ray Donnelly, to adopt the six items at the end of this memo as the minimum information requirements for earmark non-profits. Those voting in favor were: Baker, Donnelly, Hummer, Stimatz, Horton and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.

(Clerk notation: The six items referred to in the above motion are as follows:

1. Copy of the organization's Constitution and By-Laws (if not already on file);
2. Copy of the organization's IRS Letter of Determination certifying federal tax-exempt status (if not already on file);
3. Current List of Officers and members of Board of Directors;
4. Submission of invoice to the City's Finance Director requesting the annual appropriation, to include an explanation regarding how the agency plans to use the funding;
5. Copy of annual audit, including the management letter.
6. Written fiscal year-end report to the City Council detailing utilization of City funds by the agency from July 1 to June 30. The report shall be submitted on or before July 30 of each year.)

7. Committee Reports:

- a) EC-PC Economic Development Commission: Mayor Pro Tem Hummer, Councilwoman Baker, Councilman Donnelly and Mayor Peel

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer reported that during the last meeting of the Commission, Arthur McPherson was welcomed as a new member. She stated that new schools superintendent, Dr. Larry Cartner was also in attendance and was introduced to the group. She said a discussion was held regarding the sale of DRS to the United States Coast Guard. Mr. Olson stated that DRS had sold its assets to the Coast Guard, but the workforce would remain.

- b) Central Communications Advisory Board: Councilman Spence

Councilman Spence was absent from the meeting.

- c) Fireman's Relief Fund Board: Councilman Brooks

Councilman Brooks was absent from the meeting.

- d) NC Eastern Municipal Power Agency: City Manager Olson and Mayor Peel

Mr. Olson stated that the next meeting of the NCEMPA would be on Wednesday of the current week.

- e) Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc.: Councilman Donnelly

Councilman Donnelly stated that the new ECDI Executive Director Wade Nichols had been hired; and he recognized Mr. Nichols in the audience. Councilman Donnelly invited everyone to stop by Mr. Nichols' office and provide any suggestions they may have.

- f) Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce Board: Mayor Peel

Mayor Peel stated that there had been two ribbon cuttings in the last week: Nestlerode Physiotherapy, located downtown and Hobby Lobby at Tanglewood. He stated that Hobby Lobby has employed over 70 people with a starting salary for full time employees over \$15.00 per hour.

- g) Finance Committee: Mayor Pro Tem Hummer, Councilman Donnelly, Councilman Horton and Mayor Peel

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer stated that all items discussed and recommended by the Finance Committee regarding funding appear on the regular session agenda for discussion.

- h) Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Councilman Horton

Councilman Horton stated that during the last meeting of the board, several things were discussed. He said work has already begun on the Christmas parade, which will be held December 5. He said summer camps are now ending and the Parks and Recreation Department is moving forward.

- i) Elizabeth City/Pasquotank County Airport Authority: Councilman Stimatz

Councilman Stimatz stated that the meeting date of the Airport Authority had been moved to the 4th Wednesday of each month. He said the ramp repairs are ongoing and will allow the airport to handle bigger, heavier aircraft. He said the repairs are mostly being paid for with a grant from NCDOT. He reported that the Authority had signed a ground lease assignment to the United States Coast Guard in connection with the hangar purchase from DRS.

- j) Storm Water Advisory Board: Councilman Stimatz, Councilman Donnelly and Councilman Brooks

Councilman Stimatz stated that a meeting has not been held since the last quarterly meeting; but a meeting should be scheduled in September. He pointed out that the Sawyertown/Pennsylvania area has not been inundated with flooding as much as in the past. He stated that improvement is a direct result of the Elizabeth Street/bridge project renovation. He stated that initially, NCDOT was not going to address the drainage issue. He reported that due to input by staff and himself, some significant improvements in drainage had been made as a part of the project.

k) Tourism Development Authority: Councilwoman Baker

Mayor Peel announced that it was 7:00 p.m. and suggested that the Tourism Development Authority report be held during the Regular Session of the Council.

8. Adjournment:

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

Joseph W. Peel
Mayor

Vivian D. White, CMC/NCCMC
City Clerk