

**City Council Work Session
January 25, 2021**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in work session on Monday, January 25, 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
Councilwoman Jeannie Young
Councilman Kem Spence (*Arrived at 5:35 p.m.*)
Councilman Gabriel Adkins (*Arrived at 6:20 p.m.*)
Councilman Chris Ruffieux
Councilman Darius Horton (*Arrived at 5:37 p.m.*)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilman Michael Brooks

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Montre' Freeman
City Attorney Bill Morgan
Finance Director Evelyn Benton
Public Safety Director Eddie Buffaloe, Jr.
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
Community Development Director Kellen Long
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. Mayor Parker recognized Councilman Caudle to provide the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Agenda Adjustments and Approval

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

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Billy Caudle. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Ruffieux, Walton, Young and Caudle. 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. Update / Discussion – Re-adoption of Compliance Plans and Associated Efforts;

Grants Administrator Hawley advised this was an informal discussion item on Community Development Block Grants, known as CDBG. The City currently has three CDBGs at the moment, two of which are related to the raw water transmission main and one for the newly-adopted Coronavirus Care grant. CDBG requires that we adopt a series of plans, most of which are fairly straightforward. He stated the plans were last adopted in 2018, and he hoped to bring most of them back in the next several years. Staff was seeking Council advice and support on the Fair Housing Plan, which was the most involved of all

the documents. Even in its latest incarnation, it requires some level of public engagement. They've proposed two measures that can be taken in the short term to get the plan started and adopted by mid-April at the latest, included citizen surveys and questionnaires. He wanted to make sure the Council was aware of this effort and to determine if there were any additional suggestions on how to proceed with seeking this input. He noted that we did need to adopt this plan by April 17th, although the plan itself is more of a "starting point" than an end point.

Councilman Caudle recalled that we'd done a series of public meetings in the past to gather input. He supposed those were not able to be done due to the pandemic. He asked if we intended to do something like that virtually. Mr. Hawley said we were going to try to have a few webinar events, focus groups or virtual town halls. The final plan will also include a number of quarterly fair housing related activities, which will include periodic community outreach and forums so there will be continuous community contact over the course of this plan.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said whatever we do, we should be aggressive because fair housing was an item that was on a national stage. He asked if Mr. Hawley knew how many grants were in the hopper at the time. He felt that we should be on top of submissions because there was a lot of money out there. Mr. Hawley said there are many potential grant applications at some level of discussion. In grants that he was personally involved in, there were maybe up to 12 in some various level of the process. Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked that a list be brought back for the next meeting.

Motion was made by Councilman Chris Ruffieux to authorize city staff to undertake public engagement efforts and other steps to create a new fair housing plan. The motion was seconded by Councilman Kem Spence. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Spence, Ruffieux, Walton, Young, Horton and Caudle. Against: None. Motion carried.

4. Presentation – Nomination of Elizabeth City Historical Industrial District;

Director Long stated that Elizabeth City was currently home to six national historic districts. As a certified local government, the City must be involved in the process of review for the proposed district's nomination. There is criteria to use as a guideline for potential properties. During this evening's regular session, there will be an official request to call for a public hearing. If any comments from property owners are received during the comment period, those can be read into the record. No official action is required by the Council at any point during this process. This nomination was presented at HPC earlier in January.

Kellen introduced Heather Slane who had worked on the nomination. Ms. Slane advised that the proposed district is entirely industrial. It consists of 10 primary contributing resources and two primary non-contributing resources. She provided a brief background on the industrial area.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked if the goal was to expand the area. Director Long explained that this nomination did not have anything to do with a previous discussion on expanding the other district. Councilman Ruffieux asked if the Council was going to need to approve this at some point. Director Long said that they would not. They were required to have a public hearing as the local government agency, send property letters, receive public comments and then recommend to the state preservation office whether it should go forward or not, but the Council only serves as an advisory body in this instance. Councilman Ruffieux asked how this would impact the future use of what would be the industrial district. Would that limit anyone from building certain things or having certain activities in that area? Ms. Long said it would not; it's mostly an economic development tool that allows the property owner to incentivize and restore.

5. Update / Discussion – Council Retreat;

Manager Freeman stated that he was moving forward with getting the retreat together for February 8th. He'd reviewed the agenda from the prior year and intended to keep the same format if possible. He would be doing some polling of the Council to make sure the

retreat was as inclusive as possible. Councilman Horton noted that they had held the retreat in the hospital boardroom the prior year and he was not interested in doing that again with the pandemic. Manager Freeman stated he'd had a conversation with hospital personnel and discussed the spiking COVID numbers and had no intention of holding the retreat there. Councilman Caudle asked what time were we thinking to begin? Manager Freeman said it would likely begin at 8:30 a.m., but it would be confirmed after the location was solidified. He asked the Council to begin thinking about if there were any high level matters they'd like to discuss in advance.

6. Committee Reports;

a) EC-PC Economic Development Commission: Councilman Adkins, Councilman Caudle, Mayor Parker

Councilman Caudle said they'd met the prior Wednesday. They've appointed an interim, Scott Hinton, to serve as the director after the departure of Christian Lockamy. They are beginning the search process for a new director.

b) Central Communications Advisory Board: Councilman Brooks

Councilman Brooks was not present to report.

c) Fireman's Relief Fund Board: Councilman Adkins, Councilman Spence

Councilman Spence said they had not met.

d) NC Eastern Municipal Power Agency: Assistant City Manager Judge and Mayor Parker

Assistant Manager Judge advised the rate committee met on January 13th and received a presentation on rate projections and solar power storage. She said she had a copy of the presentation if anyone was interested, but most importantly, we were going to be rate neutral, so no increases were going to be recommended. A NCEMPA meeting was coming on Friday and she would be attending.

e) Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc.: Councilwoman Young

Councilwoman Young said they met on January 21st. They would begin distributing the public bike art racks in the coming weeks. She said the downtown cards were also available if anyone was interested in getting more than \$500 in savings. The TarWheel Cycling event was upcoming on April 10th and registration would be opening soon.

f) Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce Board: Mayor Parker

Mayor Parker said they did not meet.

g) Finance Committee: Mayor Parker, Mayor Pro Tem Walton, Councilman Caudle, Councilwoman Young, Councilman Brooks, Councilman Adkins, Councilman Ruffieux, Councilman Horton, Councilman Spence

Mayor Pro Tem Walton advised they did not meet.

h) Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Mayor Pro Tem Walton

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said the board did not meet.

i) Storm Water Advisory Board: Councilman Spence, Councilman Ruffieux and Councilman Horton

Councilman Ruffieux said the board did not meet.

j) Tourism Development Authority: Mayor Pro Tem Walton

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said they were supposed to meet on Thursday.

k) Airport Authority: Councilman Caudle

Councilman Caudle advised the last meeting had been December 9th. The next meeting would be the coming Wednesday. The big topic of conversation has been getting one of the runways back up and running. In one of the COVID relief bills, \$25 million was included to completely rehab Runway 119 at the local airport, which is huge. This will increase economic development, and it will also help ECSU and the students in the aviation program.

l) Albemarle RPO Transportation Advisory Committee – Councilman Ruffieux

Councilman Ruffieux said they had not met.

7. Adjournment:

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker adjourned the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley
City Clerk, NCCMC