

**City Council Work Session
March 22, 2021**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in work session on Monday, March 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
Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton
Councilman Billy Caudle
Councilwoman Jeannie Young
Councilman Michael Brooks

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilman Kem Spence
Councilman Chris Ruffieux
Councilman Darius Horton
Councilman Gabriel Adkins

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 Councilwoman Jeannie Young 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.

Councilman Caudle noted that staff had requested the Council remove the Update on Energy Conservation.

Motion was made by Councilman Billy Caudle to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Johnnie Walton. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Brooks 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. Presentation – LearnLux Fund Your Future Financial Wellness Platform:

Manager Freeman recognized Grants Administrator Hawley and Human Resources Director McClary for their presentation. Mr. Hawley stated that last fall, the City won a competition to begin a financial wellness program, which is open to all employees and retirees. It also allowed us to enter into a partnership with LearnLux to help engage our employees. LearnLux CEO Rebecca Liebman provided an update on the program. She

congratulated the Council on Elizabeth City winning this program, Fund Your Future, for the employees. The program is a digital and human guidance program for both employees and retirees. It is grant funded from the 2021 grant. As the program was launched, a financial well-being assessment was conducted. Nearly 100 employees filled out the survey, most of whom said they were financially stressed and would like help to reach their financial goals. The top financial goals of employees are preparing for retirement, building credit score, paying of credit card debt and saving or paying for large expenses. Nearly 33% of respondents did not have access to financial tools before LearnLux. This is an important program because when companies implement financial well-being, employees begin to de-stress. There are also fewer financial questions to HR. Employee turnover is reduced when employees know and understand what they're getting.

CEO Liebman advised that some of the features being utilized by employees are the financial checkup and the financial planner builder. They're also using the budget calculator and discovering how to get ready for retirement and model draw down strategies. LearnLux also offers the opportunity to speak with a certified financial planner as often as you would like. She said that we've had a very successful launch and a lot of employee interaction, both at the beginning and continued.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked how long the grant was for. CEO Liebman said it was for one year, so it would run through January of next year. He asked if the Council could take part in it. She replied that they could, they were all eligible to make an account and use any of the tools the employees were using.

4. Update – Energy Conservation (Removed During Agenda Adjustments);

5. Update – Boys and Girls Club;

Manager Freeman stated that from the previous meeting, Councilman Brooks had requested an update on the Boys and Girls Club. He said that he'd met with Attorney Hornthal, County Manager Hammett, and representatives from the Boys and Girls Club. They are not ready to accept financial help at the moment. They are still trying to work through the process. The City has begun to pull financial data to talk about our impact in terms of energy bills and so on. The meeting with the group was productive. The total ask is \$150,000, but he reiterated that it's early on and will include both the City and the County. We will look into the money the City already contributes into that pot as well as a giving campaign, where we encourage our employees to direct funding to the Boys and Girls Club. He felt that we can get the money they need by the time they need it, but they do not need it right now.

Councilwoman Young asked if we know their projected date. Manager Freeman said he was told sometime in 2022. He'd asked if they could break the \$150,000 up over a few years and was told that we could. Their short-term plan is to move to a temporary location. Councilman Caudle said he was under the impression some land had been gifted to them. Manager Freeman said that was correct.

6. Consideration – Purchase of Mobile Command Bus;

Manager Freeman reminded the Council that Chief Buffalo had presented to the Council that they shared a mobile command bus with the County, which was a struggle at times. He said they'd found a bus in great shape and they'd found a way to fund it in this budget. He noted that it would come from the budget of several departments because it would be utilized by several departments.

Deputy Chief Avens stated there was a need to invest in a mobile command bus, as they were invaluable for natural disasters, public events, vaccine clinics, and much more. The price for the bus was \$40,000 and it would be paid for across four departments. If the City secures its own command bus, we will no longer have to share a bus with the County. The bus is used and is a 2004. It has 67,000 miles on it. They investigated similar buses, which were prices at \$65,000 and \$74,5000, so they believe that this is a great price and recommend purchase.

Councilwoman Young asked if they knew how much the upfit was expected to cost. Deputy Chief Avens said they were still researching to get a bottom-line figure, but it would likely be about \$40,000. He noted that it was all in how high tech you wanted to go with it.

Councilman Caudle said he wasn't opposed to it, although the previous one we looked at was about \$80,000 before upfitting. He asked if upfitting would be done in the next year's budget? Deputy Chief said it would. Councilman Caudle asked where we intended to store the bus. Deputy Chief said possibly at Thunder Road, but we had several vehicles we needed to store, so we were looking into other locations as well. Councilman Caudle asked if the generator that it came with was large enough because it seemed rather small to him. Deputy Chief Avens said it was the generator that came with it. Councilwoman Young asked if all four departments would share the upfitting costs or would that just be PD? Manager Freeman said he wanted to look at splitting the costs if at all possible. Councilwoman Young asked if there was a warranty. Deputy Chief Avens said there was no warranty; it was as is. He noted that it was not being sold by a car lot, but rather an individual.

Mayor Pro Tem Walton asked what this particular bus was being used for. Deputy Chief Avens stated that this bus was used as a recreation vehicle and the owner primarily used it to travel to Florida.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Jeannie Young to authorize the Elizabeth City Police Department, Fire Department, Public Utilities and Electric Department to partner in the purchase of a mobile command bus from David Dozier for a price of up to \$40,000. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Brooks. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Brooks, Walton, Young and Caudle. Against: None. Motion carried.

7. Committee Reports;

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

Councilman Caudle said they met on Wednesday of the previous week. They are searching for a new director. This time of the year is rather quiet on the economic development front, but they did discuss the grant award for Runway 119 and the building of the infrastructure. There was also a finance and marketing meeting.

b) Central Communications Advisory Board: Councilman Brooks

Councilman Brooks had nothing to report.

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

Neither Spence nor Adkins were present to report.

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

Assistant Manager Judge said they were scheduled to have a monthly meeting later in the week. As reported in the City's FYI, Manager Freeman hosted a meeting of ElectriCities representatives the prior week, which was fruitful.

e) Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc.: Councilwoman Young

Councilwoman Young said she was unable to attend, but received follow-up notes. Two new businesses have opened downtown, the Potato Festival has been canceled due to COVID and decisions are being made about Music on the Green.

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

Mayor Parker said they had not met as a committee due to COVID.

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

No Finance Committee meetings had been held.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said they had not met.

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

Spence, Ruffieux and Horton were absent and could not report.

- j) **Tourism Development Authority:** Mayor Pro Tem Walton

Mayor Pro Tem Walton said they had an upcoming meeting on Thursday. He noted that the inaugural Coast Guard Marathon had occurred over the weekend and surpassed more than 5,000 runners. There were runners from as far away as Australia, China, Hong Kong and Europe. They are already planning for next year for the in-person race. Proposals on wayfinding signs have been received and will be discussed soon. There is also a new tourism initiative to highlight Black history in a five-county collaborative.

- k) **Airport Authority:** Councilman Caudle

Councilman Caudle stated they'd met Wednesday of last week, and there were many discussions around grants, most of which he'd discussed earlier.

- l) **Albemarle RPO Transportation Advisory Committee –** Councilman Ruffieux

Councilman Ruffieux was not present to report.

7. Adjournment:

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Parker adjourned the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Bettie J. Parker
Mayor

April D. Onley
City Clerk, NCCMC