

**City Council Work Session  
October 26, 2015**

The City Council of the City of Elizabeth City met in work session on Monday, October 26, 2015 in Council Chambers, located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Municipal Administration Building, 306 E. Colonial Avenue, Elizabeth City, NC.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Joe Peel  
Councilwoman Jean Baker  
Councilman Ray Donnelly  
Mayor Pro Tem Anita Hummer  
Councilman Tony Stimatz  
Councilman Michael Brooks  
Councilman Kem Spence  
Councilman Darius Horton (*arrived at 5:45 p.m.*)  
Councilman Johnnie Walton

MEMBERS ABSENT: NONE

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Rich Olson  
City Attorney Bill Morgan  
Finance Director Sarah Blanchard  
Planning Director June Brooks  
Police Captain John Etheridge  
Electric Department Superintendent Karl Clow  
Assistant to the City Manager Angela Cole  
Human Resources Director Katherine Felton  
Public Utilities Director Paul Fredette  
Fire Chief Larry Mackey  
ECDI Director Wade Nichols  
IT Director Matthew Simpson  
Inspections Director Stanley Ward  
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 with any adjustments. Those voting in favor were: Baker, Donnelly, Hummer, Stimatz, Brooks, Spence and Walton. Against: None. The motion carried unanimously. (*Horton had not yet arrived.*)**

*(Clerk Notation: No adjustments to the agenda were requested.)*

**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/Consideration – NCDOT Landscaping Plan for Elizabeth Street:**

Mayor Peel recognized Mr. Olson for an overview of this item. Mr. Olson stated that this request included three subsections: the approval of the design for Veterans Park on Water Street, which the Council had requested be brought back for consideration; the

proposed Elizabeth Street Landscape/Streetscape Plan; and acceptance of a donation from Dr. Harold and Dwan Turner of their property located at 215 N. McMorrine Street. He stated that Parks and Recreation Director Bobbi White would present the information regarding Veterans Park, Angela Cole would present the NCDOT landscaping plan for Elizabeth Street, and he would discuss for the Council the proposed property donation from Dr. Turner.

a. Consideration - Approval of Design for Veterans Park on Water Street:

Parks and Recreation Director Bobbi White reported that in 2007 the City purchased a small piece of property, which is 60 feet by 175 feet in size, consists of .205 acres and is located at the foot of the Pasquotank/Camden Bridge at 222 North Water Street. She stated that the parcel was irrigated and left as an open green space for several years. She advised that the bridge building contractor, Archer Western, needed staging space and NCDOT paid the City \$49,700 to rent the property until the construction of the bridge is completed in late 2015. She said that the City Council placed \$50,000 in the 2015-16 fiscal year Parks and Recreation Department budget for the construction of Veterans Park at this location. Ms. White stated that it was in 2010 that the City Council expressed the desire to have a park to honor our veterans and this property became the future site of the park.

Ms. White reported that Parks and Recreation Department staff worked with members of several veterans' organizations including the VFW Post 6060, American Legion and Disabled American Veterans to develop five different park designs. She said that due to its small size, this park will have street parking only. She said that these designs were presented to the Recreation Advisory Board in 2012 and the Board voted to endorse Design # 1. She explained that Design #1 features an American Flag in the center with three flags on each side for each branch of the military and the Merchant Marines, as well as a stone monument honoring all veterans. She pointed out that all flags are featured along the boardwalk of the park, with three metal park benches similar to those found at Mariners' Wharf Park along the sidewalk facing the Pasquotank River and the flags. She stated that staff presented the different park designs to the City Council on October 27, 2010, and again on October 26, 2014 highlighting Design #1.

Ms. White stated that the Recreation Advisory Board reviewed the five design plans again during their October 8, 2015 meeting and once again recommended Design #1. She said that representatives from the American Legion Post 84, American Legion Post 223, Disabled American Veterans, VFW Post 6060, and the United States Coast Guard were invited to attend a meeting regarding the proposed Veterans Park on October 15, 2015. She acknowledged that during this meeting, the veterans again preferred Design #1; but they did, however, suggest that the MIA/POW flag be flown on a flagpole separated from the other branches of the military. She said that they also suggested that this flagpole be placed in a flowerbed on the southern side of the park to represent the soldiers who are missing in action or prisoners of war whom have not returned to American soil. Ms. White stated that Bruce Simons also suggested having a brick walkway and engraving veterans' names, dates of service or the war that they fought in on the bricks. She said that it was also suggested that the City include the following on the monument placed at the base of the American Flag: "In Memory and in Honor of all Veterans that have Served our Country from Elizabeth City, Pasquotank County and the Surrounding Communities."

Ms. White noted that with the construction of the Pasquotank River Bridge nearing completion, staff was recommending that the City Council approve Design #1 in order to have the park constructed by June 30, 2016.

Councilman Stimatz asked if the City intended to also fly the NC State and City flags at the Park. Ms. White responded that the flags would be flown on cross arms below the American Flag. Councilman Stimatz inquired about the type of lighting that will be used. Mr. Olson responded that using up-lighting was staff's current intent. Councilman Stimatz suggested that staff consider the use of LED lighting at the top of the poles in order to save money. Mr. Olson responded that staff would look at that option.

Councilman Stimatz noted that the proposed bench placement was near the busy, noisy roadway. He suggested that a location by the water would be the preferred view. Ms. White stated that the plan currently allowed for as much space as possible to walk along the river railing and the flags. Mr. Olson stated that staff would look into using “bump-outs” for a different bench placement, taking into consideration ADA considerations that must be met. Councilman Stimatz suggested that staff may wish to seek public input on the bench placement.

Ms. Cole noted that the proposed plan being utilized in the presentation did not incorporate NCDOT’s landscape work for this park, which also includes two or three trees being planted.

**Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Anita Hummer, seconded by Councilman Tony Stimatz, to approve the design for Veterans’ Park on Water Street with Council’s concerns and suggestions, if they can be worked in.**

Mr. Olson stated that one of the suggestions made by the American Legion was that the City offer bricks for sale. He said that the current design could be amended to include bricks if the Council wished to do so. Councilman Spence inquired where the money would go if bricks were sold. Mr. Olson stated that the Council would need to determine that. Councilman Stimatz noted it could be done at cost, with no profit.

Councilman Walton asked if the project would have to go to Public Hearing to which Mr. Olson responded that it would not. Councilman Walton asked if the motion would allow for the project to move forward. Mr. Olson stated that with approval of the design, staff would begin the hard design work for Council’s consideration.

**Mayor Peel inquired if there were further comments or questions. Hearing none he called for a vote on the motion.**

**Those voting in favor of the motion were: Baker, Donnelly, Hummer, Stimatz, Brooks, Spence, Horton and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.**

Mayor Peel inquired about the already-installed irrigation at the site and asked if it would still be functional. Ms. White responded that the system would have to be replaced by NCDOT. Mr. Olson stated that NCDOT would also replace the railing.

**b. Presentation – Proposed Elizabeth Street Landscape/Streetscape Plan:**

Assistant to the City Manager Angela Cole stated that since June 2002, the City Council has been aware of the need to address the unsafe conditions and aesthetics of Elizabeth Street within the City limits. She noted that in February 2011, NCDOT announced the completion of the final design of the E. Elizabeth Street project. She stated that project construction began in March 2011 and was scheduled to end by spring 2015. She reported that the project included City utility relocations and NCDOT road and drawbridge construction.

Ms. Cole said that despite unexpected delays, NCDOT will be aggressively approaching the conclusion of the Elizabeth Street construction project in the coming months. She noted that in anticipation of the construction project’s end, NCDOT initiated discussion with the City regarding the landscaping element of the project. She advised that NCDOT generally reserves .05 percent from the total project budget for landscape and streetscape improvements. She stated that the Landscape Design and Development Section of NCDOT assists in the preservation and enhancement of the natural and built environment along North Carolina roadways. She pointed out that by taking into account the total cost of the construction project, the city will see an NCDOT investment of roughly \$400,000 into the Elizabeth Street streetscape project.

Ms. Cole stated that City staff has been working with the NCDOT Landscape Design and Development Division to develop a conceptual planting plan for the E. Elizabeth

Street corridor. She said that staff's presentation during the Work Session meeting is meant to provide a conceptual draft of the proposed landscape plan. Using PowerPoint slides, Ms. Cole noted that the plan includes the seven blocks along the West and East Elizabeth Street corridor from Harney Street, east to the N. Water Street intersection. She noted that the future Veterans' Park will be included in the landscape improvement project. She noted the installation of multiple linear parks, including the property being proposed as a donation to the City by Dr. Harold Turner and screening of the pump station as also being included in the project.

Ms. Cole acknowledged that the goal is to create a linear streetscape along this section of roadway. She advised that the proposed tree canopy will include Red Rocket Crape Myrtles and Bald Cypress and shrubbery in the park areas will include hollies, fountain grass and daylilies. She stated that each area of vegetation will be irrigated and the necessary infrastructure improvements are included in the project scope. She pointed out that other hardscape improvements are to incorporate a serpentine walkway made of block pavers, seat walls, ornamental fencing around the detention pond, railing at the Veterans' Park river's edge, and the trellis for the Carolina Jessamine planting.

Ms. Cole stated that NCDOT will be paying for the lion's share of the planned improvements; and once the plantings have been installed, a three year warranty period will commence. She advised that during this period, NCDOT will be responsible for all maintenance and replacement of landscape materials and at the end of the three years, it shall be the City's responsibility to properly maintain and, as necessary, replace dead or damage plantings.

Ms. Cole stated that staff from both the City's Parks and Recreation Department and Planning and Community Development Department participated in the drafting and review of the proposed plan. She stated that the opportunity to comment and recommend was provided to Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc., as well as the City's Urban Forestry Commission (UFC). She said that neither group objected to the layout of the plan; however, the UFC shared their recommendations regarding vegetation selection. Ms. Cole stated that staff shared those suggestions with NCDOT for their consideration. She said that a response had been received that there is no guarantee that NCDOT will incorporate the City's vegetation preferences into the project.

Ms. Cole stated that NCDOT encourages the City to solidify its support of the plan - as funding may be jeopardized after spring 2016.

Mr. Olson noted that the City's former Fire Station and Dr. Harold Turner's property will be demolished along this stretch of the project and the properties will become a part of the streetscape project. He also stated that the Public Works Department has requested approximately ten feet adjacent to the City's Poindexter Street parking lot in order to expand that lot.

Councilman Stimatz referred to the north side of the retention pond and asked what would be done with that. Mr. Olson said that there is existing rip rap, but NCDOT's right of way ends at the rip rap. He stated that additional easement will have to be acquired from the adjacent property owners in order to do additional plantings. He suggested that by planting hollies along that side, the thorny leaves would prevent access since there is no fencing on that side of the pond. Mr. Olson advised that NCDOT would also improve the cul de sac next to Jennette's Fruit and Produce property.

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer asked if a low-growing plant could be used to supplement the corridor plantings during the winter when the daylilies die back. Ms. Cole stated that she believed the UFC had already recommended that in their comments to NCDOT.

Councilman Walton stated that he did not believe the project would cost \$400,000; and he asked who would be responsible if the project did involve more money. Mr. Olson responded that the three-year NCDOT warranty had a good amount of value to it. He stated that the brickwork and hardscaping that had to be done is expensive; and he noted that six water meters will have to be installed for irrigation purposes.

Mr. Olson stated that NCDOT was requesting approval of the conceptual plan by the City Council in order to place the project out for bid to determine the exact cost of the project. He noted that the Council has already entered into a landscaping agreement with NCDOT for the project that allowed Council some control.

Councilman Stimatz inquired if lighting would be included in the project. Mr. Olson responded that decorative street lighting like the lighting used in the downtown was being installed. Mr. Olson noted that the long term plan was to install banner arms and hanging planters on these streetlights. Councilman Stimatz noted that once the trees are installed for the project, they may impact the street lighting. He suggested that some additional lighting may be needed as a safety precaution for citizens utilizing the linear park areas.

**Motion was made by Councilman Tony Stimatz, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Anita Hummer, to accept the design concept as presented by staff and move forward discussions with NCDOT for funding.**

Mr. Olson noted that there is one more companion agenda item regarding the acceptance of Dr. Turner's property donation. He suggested that property is essential to the landscaping plan.

**Councilman Stimatz amended his motion to add "subject to acquisition of that property."**

Mayor Peel inquired if there was additional discussion regarding this matter. Hearing none, he called for a vote on the amended motion.

**Those voting in favor of the motion were: Baker, Donnelly, Hummer, Stimatz, Brooks, Spence, Horton and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.**

c. Consideration – Acceptance of Donation from Dr. Harold and Dwan Turner for property located at 215 N. McMorrine Street:

Mayor Peel recognized Mr. Olson for his report. Mr. Olson stated that the City had received a request from the attorney representing Dr. Harold and Dwan Turner concerning the donation of their property at 215 N. McMorrine Street. He stated that the property is actually located at the corner of Martin Luther King Drive and Elizabeth Street. He advised that the parking lot contains a lot of structural-related issues because it was built on pilings. He said that a number of structural analyses had been performed on the building, which reveal the building is sub-standard and in all likelihood, will need to be demolished.

Mr. Olson stated that Dr. Turner is offering the building to the City "as is" along with the parking lot; and has agreed to a settlement with NCDOT for the damages that occurred to the building during the Elizabeth Street reconstruction project. Mr. Olson stated that the City's Chief Building Official has looked at the building and found numerous signs of settling, especially on the side of the building facing the alley.

Mr. Olson said that the City estimates it will cost \$10,000 to demolish the building, a cost that does not include the tipping fee. He said that the parking lot cement and asphalt materials would be removed and taken to the City's well field and ground up for re-use. He noted the building debris would have to be taken to the landfill. He estimated the total cost including the tipping fee to be between \$15,000 and \$18,000.

Mr. Olson stated that the City would be receiving an integral part of the Elizabeth Street streetscaping project if the property donation is accepted.

Councilman Horton inquired as to the value of the property, to which Mr. Olson responded that the tax value is \$218,500. Mr. Olson stated that in reality, the property has no value because the building needs to come down.

Councilwoman Baker inquired if the building was constructed of brick. Mr. Olson said that the lower level contains cinder blocks, with wood above and a stucco finish.

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer asked how much it might cost to make the property a nice parking lot. Mr. Olson stated that he would envision the pilings being knocked off at ground level, bringing in topsoil as part of the NCDOT project and then building up the lot as a part of the overall landscaping plan. He advised that NCDOT will not pay for the demolition of the building, but would pay for re-vegetating the area. Mr. Olson noted that the City would like to maintain the existing elevation for the parking lot area because it helps with the drainage in that vicinity.

**Motion was made by Councilman Tony Stimatz, seconded by Councilwoman Jean Baker, to accept the donation from Dr. Harold Turner and Mrs. Dwan Turner for their property located at 215 N. McMorrine Street based upon the site passing all appropriate environmental tests. Those voting in favor of the motion were: Baker, Donnelly, Hummer, Stimatz, Brooks, Spence, Horton and Walton. Against: None. Motion carried.**

#### **4. Discussion – Possible Changes to City Charter:**

Mayor Peel advised that he had asked that this discussion be placed on the agenda. He stated that he wished to read the information provided in the Council's agenda package.

The following was read into the record by Mayor Peel:

*“Over the last two years, I have had discussions with a number of our residents concerning the City Charter. Many of these conversations were prompted by the need to spend over \$16,000 to have a special election to fill former Councilman Montravias King’s seat. Issues such as the need to have a special election to fill a vacant Council seat, the need to have run-off elections, and of course, the length and non-staggering of terms that all City Council members serve are issues that I have had conversations with people about. I believe that the City Council needs to at least begin a discussion on these issues to determine if the residents of Elizabeth City support any changes – or if City Council supports any changes.*

*Unfortunately, the one issue I have heard discussed most often is the requirement to hold a special election to fill a vacant City Council seat. I have been told that Elizabeth City is one of only two cities in North Carolina that has such a provision.*

*In March 1989, the City Council adopted Resolution 89-03-03 modifying the City Charter to call for a special election to fill vacancies on the City Council. This resolution was sent to the General Assembly and was passed into law during the summer of 1989. I have always felt that any modification to the City’s Charter should be voted on by the citizens of Elizabeth City. However, under state statute, there is no authority to have a referendum election on this issue. The process used in 1989 by the City Council is still the process that we would have to follow today. It would require a local act passed by the Legislature to make this change.*

*Due to changes in the state election laws over the years, we have seen the cost to hold a special election increase from \$9,348 in 2008 to slightly over \$16,000 in 2015. This increase far exceeds the rate of inflation. I do not believe that whether a person is appointed by the Council or elected would have a major impact on the quality of the individual who ultimately fills the seat. Prior to the 2015 election, the City received an estimated itemized cost for the municipal election. The cost of the election was estimated to be \$31,481.92. If a run-off election were to be held, an additional almost \$29,000 would be expended bringing the total cost of the municipal election to right around \$60,000.*

*Most cities in North Carolina operate under a simple, non-partisan plurality rule, which means the two candidates who receive the most votes would be elected in each ward. There would not be a run-off election. In addition, the City's election would be held in November instead of October. Again, I think that if we support such a change, the citizens of Elizabeth City should be given the opportunity to vote on this change, as well.*

*Finally, the length of City Council member terms has been debated for years. Having all members of the City Council up for election at the same time could affect the continuity of the City Council. However, in comparing the last ten municipal elections, turnover rates are fairly minimal. It simply means that all members of the City Council are always in a re-election mode. If the City Council wanted to address the non-partisan plurality issue and the length of term issue, the process under state statute is fairly simple. The City Council would adopt a Resolution of Intent outlining the proposed changes. At the time the Resolution of Intent is adopted, a public hearing is called. There are very specific public notice requirements for this process. After the public hearing is held, the City Council may adopt an ordinance amending the City's Charter. At this point in the process, the City Council could make the ordinance effective only upon approval by a vote of the people - or the City Council could choose not to make the ordinance subject to an approving vote. The ordinance would be published in the newspaper and would be subject to a petition being filed, which would have to be signed by 10% of the total number of registered voters requesting a referendum on the Charter amendment.*

*If the City Council decides to pursue making changes to the Charter and calling for a referendum, the item would need to be placed on the November 2016 general election ballot. Historically, voter turnout for these general elections far exceeds the turnout for municipal elections."*

Mayor Peel stated that these are some of the things that he has heard; and he wanted to bring them to the table to determine if the Council had any interest in having a further conversation about any or all of the issues.

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer stated that even though the Council has the authority to appoint to vacant seats, the Council needed to keep in mind transparency and the fact that the citizens should have their say. She stated it should be a "special citizens' initiative." She acknowledged that there would not be a run-off in an election like that. She stated that the general election timeframe would not cost as much as a special election if it were held in November 2016. She pointed out that the Council does have the authority to go back to four-year terms anytime there are enough votes.

Councilman Spence stated that he had previously said that it takes two years for a new Council member to get accustomed to the operation of being on Council. He said he thought four-year terms were better for Council members; and in addition would save the City money.

Councilman Horton stated that he would also agree with four year terms. He said that by the time a Council member learns the rules and procedures, it's time to run for election again. He pointed out that Pasquotank County also operates under four year terms for Commissioners. He said that he would not support the City Council having the authority to appoint to fill a vacant seat, because he felt it was important that the residents be given an opportunity to voice their opinion, regardless of the reason for the vacancy. He noted that Council members do not always know the "pulse" of the citizens living in other Wards than their own.

Councilman Walton stated that he would agree with Councilman Horton that four year terms provide new Councilors with experience. He noted that without the Special Election held in 2015, he would not be sitting on the Council because during the recent election, some members of the Council tried to persuade voters not to vote for three members of the Council. He said that "some people like to have everything go their way and without having a person like me up here to speak what I feel is the right thing to do – they rather have somebody up here that's going to be a crony and go along with

everything that they want.” He stated that he would definitely prefer a Special Election to fill vacancies.

Councilman Stimatz stated that he felt the people in the wards need to pick their representative. He noted “if it costs money, it costs money.” He said that the plurality issue is interesting. He stated that you could conceivably have an election whereby all candidates receive approximately the same number of votes, yet the two top vote recipients would win regardless. He stated that would not be an example of the people speaking because there would not be a run-off election. He said that he would like some more information regarding where the City stands in terms of plurality. He stated that he did not have a problem with two year terms, and said “I think they’re great.” He said two year terms mean “you can’t sit here and just show up the first year and sleep for the last three – or two in the middle - and suddenly wake up for the last year and do something. You have to show up, come to the meetings, do your homework and learn the rules.” He said “no offense, but the rules of this Council aren’t that difficult to learn – and the rules of the City.” He asked Mayor Pro Tem Hummer why the City changed from four year terms to two years.

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer stated “there was a lot of turmoil within the City – one department in particular – and the citizens really - there were 500 people up here and outside one time and they really pushed for it.”

Councilman Stimatz asked “what was their reason?”

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer responded “I suppose they thought that you can’t get anyone out of office other than shorten the terms.”

Councilman Stimatz stated “it was an accountability issue” to which Mayor Pro Tem responded in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Baker stated that she had never been in favor of four year terms and would not be on Council if the terms were four years. She stated that she remembered the former situation and remembered people talking about being able to get someone out of office after two years if they did not prove themselves. She stated that “for someone to commit four years of their life right out of the gate – was a lot for a City like we are.” She pointed out that “we can’t get good people to run for two years, say nothing about getting them to run for four.” She stated that as far as filling vacancies, she did not object to a Special Election so much as she did the timetable. She said if someone got off the Council after eighteen months of a two year term, she thought it should be handled differently than if they had eighteen months left to go. She suggested there could be different rules and different options depending on how much time someone had served and how much time they had left.

Councilman Donnelly stated that he liked the idea of first checking with fellow citizens to make sure this is what they would want to do. He said that in addition, he would agree that municipal elections have low voter turnout. He said he didn’t think people thought of October as being Election Day and pointed out that Election Day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. He said he thought if municipal elections were tied to the general election, more people would turn out to vote. He stated that it needs to be made easier to vote and if the City were tied into that process, he thought it would work out very well. He stated that although Special Elections are expensive, he agreed that the people must decide. He said that he could live with two or four years, but the terms need to be staggered. He pointed out that the City could end up with a brand new Council unaware of what’s going on. He stated that there needs to be continuity, even though in the past it has worked out pretty well.

Councilman Walton pointed out that the Charter already provides a time period for filling vacant seats by Special Election. He noted that if former Councilman Montravias King had waited a few more days, a Special Election would not have been scheduled. Mr. Olson agreed that if a vacancy occurs within 60 or 90 days before the first date for filing, the successor is elected during the next municipal election. He said he would have to check the Charter to make sure the number of days.

Councilman Walton, in responding to Councilwoman Baker, stated that she could not say “who is a good one and who is a bad one.” He stated that all a candidate has to do

is be a resident in the ward for a certain period of time, be of a certain age and have certain criteria. He stated “give everybody the opportunity.”

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer stated that it was mostly people in the Second Ward that pushed for two year terms. She said that she thought, for several reasons, it was a good idea. She said that it costs more money but everything comes at a price. She stated that two year terms provide Council members and citizens the opportunity to get to know each other. She said that she thought it was a weak excuse to say that the job can't be learned in two years. She suggested that if a Councilor set their mind to it and devoted the time, they could learn what is needed to be an extremely effective Council person in two years.

Councilman Spence stated that he was not using two year terms as an excuse, because it was a fact. He said that for a working person, it takes a period of time to learn all the ordinances, the charter and policies. He pointed out that Council members have to begin running for office again before two years are up. He said he did not think a Council member could be as effective in two years as they could be in four years.

Councilman Brooks pointed out that everyone appeared to be of “one accord” that the Council should not appoint someone to fill a vacancy – that the people should decide during a Special Election. He stated that he agreed with Councilman Spence that the first year of a Council term was a hard learning experience and acknowledged that the second year is an election year with people campaigning for re-election beginning in January. He said that he thought a four-year term was better than a two-year term. He stated that if a Council member was not doing his/her job, the people should hold them accountable. He said that he also did not believe the City Council should have a run-off. He stated if someone calls for a run-off and loses by one vote, they cannot call for another run-off. He said that the election should be based on the number of votes cast and “whatever you lose by, you just lose by.”

Mayor Peel stated that to summarize, it appeared everyone was pretty much in agreement regarding Special Elections. He said that there was a “mixed bag” on the two and four year terms and a request for more information regarding the issue of plurality. He requested that the City Manager prepare additional information on these items for the Council to consider during a future meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer asked if there was any way for two year terms to be staggered. Mayor Peel responded that in order to do so, there would have to be an election held every year. Mr. Olson pointed out that in order to have staggered terms, an “A” seat and a “B” seat would have to be designated in each ward.

## **5. Committee Reports:**

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

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer advised that she was unable to attend due to illness. Councilwoman Baker stated that it was a very short meeting because there was no quorum.

- b) Central Communications Advisory Board: Councilman Spence

Councilman Spence had no report.

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

Councilman Brooks had no report.

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

City Manager Olson reported that ElectriCities CEO Graham Edwards had retired and Roy Jones has been named to succeed him. He said that a discussion had been held regarding the interim financing needs to defease the bond debt associated with the sale

of the generating assets. He reported that better rates than anticipated had been realized and the City would receive a credit of roughly \$140,000 with its October bill.

e) Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc.: Councilman Donnelly

Councilman Donnelly reported that the Committee of 100, ECDI and Economic Development Commission held a successful “Jump Start Downtown” competition last year to help revitalize the downtown and are in the process of conducting a second competition with applications due on January 16, 2016. He said that the goal is to encourage entrepreneurs to open a new business in the downtown area.

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

Mayor Peel reported that Chamber’s new officers had been elected for the coming year. He said that the Chamber has also gotten involved with Workforce Development to work on getting businesses to sign up for the Work Ready Community Program.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Hummer stated that all items discussed by the Finance Committee had been forwarded to the full Council and appeared on the agenda for the regular meeting.

h) Parks and Recreation Advisory Board: Councilman Horton

Councilman Horton had no report.

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

Councilman Stimatz announced that the Authority had called a Special Meeting to meet with NCDOT staff to discuss the master plan and the airport air-land compatibility study.

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

Councilman Stimatz stated that City staff continues to develop the “no yard waste in the gutter program,” which will be presented to the board in early December, with hopes to launch the campaign in January or February 2016.

k) Tourism Development Authority: Councilwoman Baker

Councilwoman Baker stated that the new tourism director, Christina Rehkla, had “hit the ground running” and had been meeting with various agencies to learn what Elizabeth City is all about. She stated that three Rose Buddy receptions had been held for visiting boaters and she invited anyone interested to come to the waterfront and help welcome boaters from all over the world. She said that it had been determined that the 16,900 Pasquotank County households pay \$256 less per year in local and state taxes because of tourism dollars.

**8. Adjournment:**

There being no further business to be discussed, Mayor Peel adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

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Joseph W. Peel  
Mayor

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Vivian D. White, CMC/NCCMC  
City Clerk