



CITY OF
ELIZABETH CITY
HARBOR OF HOSPITALITY *North Carolina*

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council
FROM: Rich Olson, City Manager
REF: City Manager's Weekly FYI ~ Week Ending February 14, 2020
COPY: Email Distribution

1. The City of Elizabeth City has received \$150,000 for a comprehensive assessment of its sanitary sewer system, representing a key step in planning and prioritizing future maintenance and improvements. Last September, City staff submitted an Asset and Inventory Assessment Grant to the NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) - Division of Water Infrastructure. On Wednesday, the State Water Infrastructure Authority (SWIA) considered more than 100 grant applications, and funded the top 31 requests -- Elizabeth City's among them! The grant, which requires a local match of only \$7,500, will use acoustic technology to thoroughly examine the sewer system and identify areas that need attention before a major problem, such as sinkholes, occurs. While the grant will not pay for maintenance projects themselves, it will help the City spend its maintenance dollars more wisely and make a better case for funding of repairs in future grant applications. This grant is one of many that the City would be unable to apply for if the water system was privatized. NCDEQ has awarded several other major grants to the City's water and sewer utilities in recent years. The City would like to thank the department and the SWIA for their continued support.
2. On Tuesday, Public Utilities staff received training to operate their new sewer camera: the Quickview airHD from EnviroSight. The wireless camera can be placed down into manholes and controlled by City staff using a tablet to inspect the condition of the sanitary sewer and stormwater systems. The City made this purchase in part thanks to a \$5,000 grant awarded from the North Carolina League of Municipalities. With this new technology, we are better equipped to identify



where our infrastructure needs to be repaired. From roots breaking into a stormwater pipe to cave-ins on a sewer main, City staff can now record and locate issue areas to prevent further damage to our system.

3. This week, Chief Buffalo, Assistant City Manager Cole and I met with Warden Vaughn from the Pasquotank County Correctional Institution to discuss potentially reinstating our contract with them for inmate labor. The City was one of the first local communities to have an Inmate Services Agreement. In 2004, the City Council authorized staff to enter into an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Corrections, which allowed the City to utilize up to 10 inmates per day. After the October 12, 2017 tragedy at the prison, the City's use of inmate laborers ceased. The inmates authorized for labor from Pasquotank Correctional are minimum security risks and are housed at separate facility from the one where the incident occurred. In the 13 years the City has used inmates, only a few incidents occurred, which were immediately addressed by Correctional staff. The use of inmates saves the City hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. I will be briefing the City Council on this matter during the February 21, 2020 retreat.
4. On Thursday, I joined Parks and Recreation staff to participate in a punch list walk-through with Senior Center Architect John Farkas and General Contractor AR Chesson. During the walk-through, we identified the following items as needing attention: touch-up paint around wall plates and columns; cleaning paint overspray from wall units; lighting and light fixtures; wall dusting; flooring in stairwells; diffuser cleaning; and toilet and plumbing repair in the 2nd floor bathrooms (handled by staff). Overall, the project is coming together nicely; the contractor's work is approximately 90-95% completed. There will be a final cleaning and walk-through conducted at the center in the weeks to come. In the meantime, staff has begun installing electronics and will begin moving in furnishings in the near future.
5. Last week, the City was notified of Engineering Report Funding Approval for the Raw Water Reservoir Rehabilitation. This project will include rehabilitation of the raw water reservoir (new liner, discharge pipe anti-vortex plate, and floating ball cover) as well as major modifications to the Water Treatment Plant to provide 4-log inactivation/removal of viruses, 3-log inactivation/removal of giardia, and 2-log removal of cryptosporidium. The modifications to the plant include: replacement of two flocculator motors and six paddlewheels, replacement of five filter turbidimeters and associated SCADA upgrade, replacement of the combined filter effluent sample pump, rehabilitation of the filter tubs, and replacement of the filter media. This project is being funded through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for a funding amount up to \$1,073,303. Of this, the City is eligible for 75% principal forgiveness, making the City's responsibility

\$268,326. While the private sector is eligible for these funds, they are not eligible for the principal forgiveness. This project has a total principal forgiveness of \$804,977. This project is currently being designed and is scheduled to begin construction in April 2021.

6. Last December, the City Council approved the implementation of a Cold Weather Voucher Program designed to provide temporary shelter for those in need during the winter months. The Police Department, who oversees the program, reached out to all hotels and motels in the City limits to see which establishments would be interested in participating. The Queen Elizabeth Motel agreed to participate. Since the program began in December 2019, there have been 139 vouchers issued. Homeless individuals receiving the voucher are given one night's lodging at the Queen Elizabeth Motel. There have been 21 men and 14 women utilizing the program, ranging in age from 21 – 62 (men) and from 19 – 71 (women). To date, the City has spent \$7,554.45 on the voucher program. The initial protocol for the program was to direct homeless individuals to the faith-based Room in the Inn program first; when they were filled, then the voucher system took over. The Room in the Inn program closed on February 2, 2020; it reported serving 53 individuals this winter. The voucher program has been running successfully since its implementation. The Police Department reports that there was one incident that involved the arrest of a participant, whose voucher was voided due to the incident and subsequent arrest. Chief Buffaloe will be providing a post-review of the operation of the program during its first season at the City Council's retreat, and will make recommendations, if any, on ways it can be improved upon for the next season.

7. Two downtown projects that were recipients of the City of Elizabeth City's Business Improvement Grants have recently been completed. The grant closeouts were



completed this week for renovation/restoration projects at 202 North Poindexter Street and 602 East Colonial Avenue. Glass Music has already moved into the storefront at 202 North Poindexter Street and Ghost Harbor Brewing Company will soon be occupying the space on Colonial Avenue. Both Glass Music and Ghost Harbor Brewing are existing downtown businesses that are expanding due to business growth. Center Square Development Company received two BIGs for the renovations at these locations; one for \$12,000 and the other for \$8,000, not exceeding the maximum allowable \$20,000 BIG for one tax parcel. Total investment on both projects is \$95,772.29. Additional investment will be made by Ghost Harbor Brewing Company at the Colonial Avenue space. These projects are great examples of the success of the City's Business Improvement Grant program and private investment. We thank the property owner, Center Square Development Company LLC for their investment and work on these projects and in downtown Elizabeth City.

8. The City of Elizabeth City is currently seeking individuals who reside in the corporate limits of Elizabeth City to serve as members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Minimum qualifications do not apply; however, special consideration will be given to applicants with a background in land use and development, planning, land use law, or general commerce. Membership of the commission is on a voluntary basis. The Board of Zoning Adjustment meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. For more information, please contact our community Development Department at (252)337-6672.
9. The City of Elizabeth City is seeking two individuals who reside within the corporate limits of Elizabeth City to serve as members of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission works on a variety of projects and makes recommendations to the City Council concerning Conditional Use Permits, rezonings, preliminary subdivision plans, and text amendments. The Commission may conduct studies and recommend to the City Council plans, goals, and objectives relating to the growth, development, and re-development of the City. The Planning Commission meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 4:00 p.m. For more information, please contact our Community Development Department at (252) 337-6672.
10. For the month of February, our Code Enforcement Division has had a total of 48 new cases so far. From 02/01/2020 to 02/14/2020, 41 cases have been closed, with 97 cases still active.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

The City Council will gather for a planning retreat on Friday, February 21, 2020 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Board Room at Sentara Albemarle Medical Center located at 1144 North Road Street, Elizabeth City, North Carolina.