

January 22, 2024

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a regular session scheduled for 4:00 p.m. in the George W. Dudley City Council Chamber of the Frederick E. Turnage Municipal Building with Mayor C. Saunders "Sandy" Roberson, Jr. presiding.

Councilmembers present: André D. Knight, Reuben C. Blackwell, IV*, Richard Joyner, T.J. Walker, Jr.*, Lige Daughtridge, Tom Harris and Jabaris Walker.

*joining remotely

Staff present: Keith Rogers Jr., City Manager; Kim Batts, City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Nyki Hill, Assistant City Manager; Emilie Pinkston, Director of the Department of Development Services; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Darvin Moore, Fire Chief; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Kellianne Williams, Assistant to the City Manager for Strategic Initiatives; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; Kream Mosley, Deputy City Clerk; Monica Brantley, Deputy City Clerk and Richard J. Rose, City Attorney.

Security Officers: Corporal Clay Wilder, Sergeant Chris Williams, and Senior Police Officer Shawn Battle.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and requested all in attendance to stand for a moment of silent prayer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Harris, and unanimously carried that the minutes of the Regular Scheduled City Council meeting held September 11, 2023 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None

COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER

City Manager Keith Rogers Jr. provided the following community update. The City Manager reported that:

- Stated the Imperial Centre has two exciting traveling exhibits
- Stated one is on the world inside your head, also known as the brain, which will have an engagement exhibit for all ages to provide a hands-on, up-close look at the human body
- Stated the other exhibit is the sun, earth, and universe, where visitors will learn about how NASA missions are designed as well as help answer any questions about the solar system and our wider universe
- Stated for more information you can call the Imperial Center or visit: Imperialcentre.org

PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor opened the meeting for petitions from the public and outlined guidelines for public petitions. He called on the following individuals for public comment and a brief summary of comments is outlined below:

Richard Petway

- Stated the City workers asking for an increase is not just about the sanitation workers but about a class of people that need a boost and their needs are being ignored by the City Manager
- Asked how they can make a commitment to the community where the same class of people reside when they cannot commit to the staff that keep the City operating
- Stated they must make people aware of the proper way to make complaints in a way that it does not threaten their livelihood
- Stated there are many procedures that are not understood and a standard must be set
- Called for the City Manager to reinstate Arnie Jones

Dr. Kim Koo

- Stated the job of the City Manager is to ensure the smooth running of the City government, address the problems raised by the citizens and ensure approval and the continuing satisfaction for his employment
- Stated within a few months of the City Manager taking office, he created a hierarchy of privilege among City workers where one or two groups got hefty raises and others got bypassed
- Stated by this action, sanitation worker Arnie Jones raised his voice to this act of inequality by bravely speaking up on behalf of the other City workers by petitioning Council regularly and for that he was fired on the job for minor infractions
- Stated the City Manager also fired Kirk Brown as the City's Public Relations Director and refused to give information to the Rocky Mount Telegram stating that he does not talk about personnel matters on the record but gave details of the firing of Arnie Jones to the same Rocky Mount Telegram
- Asked what Kirk Brown has done to incur the City Manager's displeasure that cannot be revealed on record
- Stated she has given examples of why the City Manager is no longer fit for his position and unless he changes his ways, she cannot see how he is going to solve some of the bigger ongoing problems

Mumtaz Shaik

- Stated if the City Manager's letter to the newspaper on why he fired Arnie Jones was designed to make an example of Mr. Jones she thinks it only showed the City Manager's character
- Stated within months of arriving in Rocky Mount, the City Manager ransacked the budget demanding an extra \$75,000 be added to his pay, hugely increasing the salaries of the police and first responders
- Stated the City Manager has a responsibility to better the economic and social lives of all in Rocky Mount

Tim Barnes

- Thanked all the citizens that came up and spoke up for the sanitation workers especially Arnie Jones
- Stated sometimes you cannot change the mind of people who do not want their minds changed

Mr. Barnes disrupted the City Council meeting and Mayor Roberson asked for him to be escorted out of the meeting.

Mayor Roberson moved the public petitions to the end of the meeting to ensure City business was handled without further disruption.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Harris, seconded by Councilmember Joyner unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the Consent Agenda [Items 8(A) through 8(B), be approved as follows and more specifically:

A. AD VALOREM TAX RELEASES:

That the following tax releases be acknowledged and approved for release and/or refund:

SCHEDULE A - acknowledge receipt of report of the following taxes under \$100 approved for release and/or refund by the City Manager:

YEAR	BILL	NAME/ADDRESS	TAX		COMMENT
<i>NASH COUNTY</i>					
2023	2284	FIRST-CITIZENS BANK & TRUST COMPANY C/O RYAN TAX COMPLIANCE SERVICES LLC PO BOX 460709 HOUSTON TX 77056	2.34	PEN	LATE LIST REMOVAL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	2.34		
2023	2286	FIRST-CITIZENS BANK & TRUST COMPANY C/O RYAN TAX COMPLIANCE SERVICES LLC PO BOX 460709 HOUSTON TX 77056	7.92	PEN	LATE LIST REMOVAL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	7.92		
2023	2287	FIRST-CITIZENS BANK & TRUST COMPANY C/O RYAN TAX COMPLIANCE SERVICES LLC PO BOX 460709 HOUSTON TX 77056	1.44	PEN	LATE LIST REMOVAL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	1.44		
2023	2288	FIRST-CITIZENS BANK & TRUST COMPANY C/O RYAN TAX COMPLIANCE SERVICES LLC PO BOX 460709 HOUSTON TX 77056	5.13	PEN	LATE LIST REMOVAL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	5.13		
2023	2289	FIRST-CITIZENS BANK & TRUST COMPANY C/O RYAN TAX COMPLIANCE SERVICES LLC PO BOX 460709 HOUSTON TX 77056	17.98	PEN	LATE LIST REMOVAL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	17.98		
2023	1002332	TEAGUE SHARON FAULKNER TEAGUE ERNEST JAMES JR 4257 BELGREEN DR ROCKY MOUNT NC 27804	22.10	CITY	PERSONAL PROPERTY LOCATED OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS
		TOTAL RELEASE:	22.10		

SCHEDULE B - acknowledge receipt of report of the following taxes over \$100 approved for release and/or refund by the City Council:

YEAR	BILL	NAME/ADDRESS	TAX		COMMENT
<i><u>NASH COUNTY</u></i>					
2023	2224	CHIPOTLE MEXICAN GRILL INC ATTN: KEN ANDREWS & CO INC 2424 RIDGE RD ROCKWALL TX 75087	192.39	PEN	LATE LIST REMOVAL
		TOTAL RELEASE:	192.39		

B. ANNEXATION NO. 335 - 1951 OLD WILSON ROAD (CONTIGUOUS)

The City Council received a petition for annexation from the property owner of 1951 Old Wilson Road PIN 375990479800, contiguous parcel.

Receipt of the petition was acknowledged and **Resolution No. R-2024-6** entitled **RESOLUTION ORDERING THE CITY CLERK TO INVESTIGATE THE SUFFICIENCY OF A PETITION FOR ANNEXATION OF A CONTIGUOUS AREA INTO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT/ ANNEXATION NO. 335 - 1951 OLD WILSON ROAD - PIN 375990479800** was adopted.

PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING

The Mayor opened up a public hearing relative to the following rezoning request recommended for approval and found in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Board:

- Request by Omar Bayyari Mohammad (A.M.E. Automotive & Services Express) to rezone a +1.44-acre site at 14500 US 64 Alt. West Hwy. from B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial District) to B-5CD (Conditional Commercial Services District) - *with a condition that salvage operations and junk yards are prohibited on the subject property.*

It was noted that this item was postponed from January 8, 2024 City Council meeting. The recommended action is to postpone the item until February 12, 2024 City Council meeting.

Councilmember Knight stated there will be a community meeting tomorrow at City Hall at 5:00 p.m. and encouraged any citizens with concerns about the rezoning matter to please come out.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the item be postponed until February 12, 2024 City Council meeting.

FIRE STATION #2 - APPLICATION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION (LGC) FOR APPROVAL OF INSTALLMENT PURCHASE CONTRACT/PUBLIC HEARING

The Mayor opened a public hearing relative to filing an application to the Local Government Commission (LGC) for approval of an installment purchase contract for the Construction and Equipping of Fire Station #2.

City Manager Rogers stated the City is seeking approval from LGC to allow financing of the project with a maximum not to exceed \$11.4 million and asked Mike Baughn, Director of Central Services to provide Council with an update about the item.

Mike Baughn, Director of Central Services, provided City Council the following information:

- Stated they are going to rebuild Fire Station 2 as it is well over 50 years old and has exceeded its useful lifespan
- Stated the proposed fire station is a 16,240 square-foot station, two-story masonry and steel structure with apparatus bays, offices, day room and kitchen on the ground floor

- Stated there will be space for two apparatuses with space planned for a third apparatus in the future
- Stated upstairs there will be sleeping quarters, showers, laundry facilities and a study; a separate training space will be near the rear of the facility
- Stated the station is planned to accommodate three shifts of 4 to 6 personnel per shift and 25 to 30 staff for training sessions

Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge stated he recalled Council approving funding for this a couple years ago and asked what the figure was then because it seems to have increased significantly.

Mr. Baughn responded that the cost has increased due to the scope of the project changing significantly. He stated when the project started back in 2019, the proposed station was somewhere around \$4.5 million, but it was not set up to accommodate various genders and it did not completely meet the needs of the area due to the need for a training area/community space. He stated since 2019 there have been many escalations in pricing with construction and while the price of \$11.4 million seems high, it is in line with what some other municipalities are paying for stations.

Councilmember Knight asked for clarification on what the figure was when Council initially approved it.

Mr. Baughn responded that when Council initially approved the project, they approved the idea of design build and during the process there were several things added to the project. He stated the initial figure was \$4.5 million.

Councilmember Knight asked the City Manager and Council if the item shouldn't have come back to the City Council to review the new design and receive input once there was a price change from \$4.5 million to \$11.4 million. He stated he does not believe a review of the design has happened since it was initially approved and he feels something with this price tag should be reviewed by Council before coming to a City Council meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge stated he does think it came on the agenda 2 or 3 years ago, but it was not discussed and did not come back to the Committee of the Whole for them to discuss. He stated he does not disagree with Councilmember Knight. He stated at this point, the City is 4-5 years in and needs to decide on moving forward. He explained that he is a block away from Station 2 and they are very active and do a great job. He stated in the western part of the City in Ward 5 there is also a great need for a fire station.

Councilmember T.J. Walker stated he believes almost a year ago this item was on the agenda to approve financing up to \$10 million. He stated that he is not sure of the design difference, but thinks he recalls seeing the first amended design, but he does not recall

seeing the original design. He stated if the design concept is what is in question, he does not think that is something that what done during the last management, but he did think City Council approved up to \$10 million dollars.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he is not hesitant about the project. He does think, as a matter of process and protocol, that anytime there is a major escalation in price or significant change in design/function that a review should be scheduled for a Committee of the Whole so a more in-depth discussion can be held. He stated that whether this item is approved or not that he would request in the future anytime there is a significant program or project that requires funding, especially debt engagement, that it is scheduled for a Committee of the Whole in order for City Council to have a chance to discuss it.

Councilmember Harris stated thinks he recalls the project being listed in the CIP for about \$11 million. He stated \$11.4 million is a large amount of money but it is not a total surprise. He asked if this is approved, when would it be submitted to contractors for bidding.

City Manager Rogers stated that Councilmember Harris was correct. He stated the last update was provided was during the Council retreat as they were building the CIP budget, and the project is included for about \$11 million. He explained the request on the agenda tonight is permission to move forward with pursuing the financing not to exceed \$11.4 million. He stated if the Council votes in the affirmative tonight, staff will bring a resolution to Council related to the actual financing which will include the bank vendor at the February 12th City Council meeting. He stated February 12th is a Committee of the Whole day as well and he will work to provide the Council with an update on the project design so there will be a finite number for financing and the actual design.

Councilmember Joyner asked if the Council would get this during or before the next Committee of the Whole so they will have time to look at the design and finances.

Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge responded that if they have time they certainly will, but they are going to allocate a great deal of the Committee of the Whole to the audit.

Mayor Roberson opened the floor to anyone from the public who wishes to speak on this particular matter and the following people spoke:

Richard Petway

- Stated he understands that the fire department needs this building, but if they can find the money to build an \$11.4 million dollar fire station why can't they find the money to give the City workers

Theresa Alston Stokes

- Stated she feels like affordable housing for residents is more important than trying to build a fire station right now
- Stated there are residents who have been pushed out of the City because they are not finding housing, so she does not think the fire station should take precedence over affordable housing

Councilmember Knight asked for clarification on the update for the project being on the next Committee of the Whole.

Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge stated it would be a tight schedule and the review of the audit would take precedence.

Council Comments

Councilmember Knight -

- Stated he supports the project. He feels when a price tag changes that much, even though it is in the CIP, it is still good practice to bring it back to Council to refresh their memory and give them an overview of what is going to come before them

Mayor Roberson -

- Stated the consideration related to the approval of bank selection/financing would be at the next meeting and asked Councilmember Knight if he would be okay moving forward to see if enough information was provided to him by that time

Councilmember Blackwell -

- Stated hopefully the budget is strong enough to handle multiple priorities since public safety is important, as well as housing
- Thanked Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge for scheduling an intense review of the budget
- Stated many of them have questions about where housing is as a priority of the Council and how it is reflected in the budget
- Stated he hopes a lot of these things will be cleared up in their next meeting
- Stated he is supportive of this project

No one else from the public appeared and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

It was noted that resolution R-2023-39 entitled, "Resolution Declaring Official Intent of the City of Rocky Mount to Reimburse Expenditures Made for the Construction of Fire Station #2" and resolution R-2023-40 entitled, "Resolution Authorizing the Filing of an Application for Approval of an Installment Financing Contract" were amended on December 11, 2023, to update the cost of the project to \$11,400,000.

It was further noted that the consideration for selection of the bank lender would be on the agenda for the February 12, 2024 City Council meeting.

Motion was made by Councilmember T.J Walker, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried that authorization to submit an application for an installment financing contract to the Local Government Commission (LGC) for the construction and equipping of Fire Station #2 be approved.

PUBLIC HEARING/DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT GRANT/201 WASHINGTON STREET

The Mayor opened a public hearing relative to a downtown major development grant for 201 S. Washington Street in the amount of \$500,000.

Kellianne Williams, Assistant to the City Manager for Strategic Initiatives gave a brief overview of the request. It was noted that the developers discussed their intention to redevelop these properties into housing and retail space at a Committee of the Whole meeting.

Benton Moss with New South Ventures stated these projects are very special to him as he is a native of Rocky Mount and he is very passionate about downtown Rocky Mount.

Councilmember Knight stated he is excited about the project, but he noticed that there was not an operating budget included. He stated according to the major downtown development grant guidelines, an operating budget must be included in order to receive it. He continued stating that also, it did not address the additional incentives that were requested by the developer.

Benton Moss, NSV, responded that they can provide the operating budget so that can be made available.

Mrs. Williams informed City Council that the operating budget was reviewed by staff for the brevity of the application. She also noted the fact that the proforma is a fluid document with a varying degree of what the ultimate development cost will be, the ability to see the spaces leased, the commercial space to be leased among other things. She explained that it is not super concrete, but it was reviewed by staff to determine that the developers are financially sound enough to get this project done and the project should perform based on the intention of the lease up. She stated as far as the other incentive grants, Councilmember Knight is right, they are intending on applying for the other incentive grants. She explained that the downtown major investment incentive program grant is the grant that requires Council approval due to the large amount of incentive, and they did not want to confuse the addition of multiple other grants for consideration in the presentation to Council.

Councilmember Knight requested that the additional information, including the operating budget, be sent to Council.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated it is his understanding, and he would like to confirm, that the funds would not be expended until after the completion of the project, therefore the risk of losing money is slim provided that they meet all the criteria of the grant.

Benton Moss, NSV, responded that the way they structured it originally was that the City would be the first money to commit per se but the last money in. He explained that it certainly would not be spent on any predevelopment or anything as they have all the

predevelopment completed to date, so it would be part of the capitalization of the projects.

Mrs. Williams stated that it will not be totally after the project is completed but it will be toward the latter stages of the project. She explained pursuant to the agreement included in the Council agenda packet, even though the incentive program allows for the City to make 5 equal disbursements of \$100,000 a piece, the developers will not be able to make their first draw on the \$500,000 until they have reached at least 50 percent completion of the project and then 5 equal disbursements after that.

Councilmember Joyner thanked everyone for the excitement for this project and stated he hopes there will be some collaborative efforts with other projects that have been ongoing downtown. He stated he hopes this will provide some encouragement and support for those projects and he would personally like to hear information regarding those projects so they can see how to move some of them forward as well.

Benton Moss responded that he hopes that this potential partnership will spur those on and it is good for everybody.

Councilmember Harris stated he was not present at the COW 2 weeks ago but he is very impressed about these 2 projects and is hopeful that this will be a springboard for other investors taking a look at downtown Rocky Mount. He stated that he believes WRALs broadcast really gave a good light on what everyone is trying to do in downtown Rocky Mount. He explained that he is concerned about asking for the application information be presented to Council as he does not recall asking other businesses to submit their grant application information to the Council. He stated he believes that only goes to Community Development if he is not mistaken. He continued by stating if this information is requested to be presented to Council for this group then the same should be asked of those who want downtown grants for business improvements, roof improvements, façade improvements, and he was under the impression that Council did not want to do that.

Sue Perry Cole

- Stated materials included with the City Council agenda pertaining to these two public hearing items mentioned the City's investment program is funded from an allocation received by the city from the state and local fiscal recovery fund under the American Rescue Plan Act
- Stated these same ARPA funds were the focus of a City sponsored public engagement process during fall 2022 when Rocky Mount residents were invited to share their thoughts regarding on how these ARPA funds should be used but the downtown investment program was not approved until January 9, 2023
- Stated we are all aware that Rocky Mount is confronting significant housing problems and if the City is to grow its population and tax base in the future as well as benefit from the City's availability of lower cost land and housing, we must recognize that Rocky Mount's future housing need cannot be met by today's housing supply
- Stated Rocky Mount like other communities across the nation is challenged by decades of underinvestment in housing stock

- Stated right now man is outpacing housing supply and this dynamic combined with rising housing costs has created a crisis in affordability which affects Rocky Mount residents of all income levels especially low income
- Stated if the proposed \$1.6 million commitment by New South Ventures marks the beginning of a surge in outside private investment, then Rocky Mount is in position to make real improvements in housing and neighborhood investments
- Stated all of Rocky Mount stakeholders need to join together in the City's upcoming planning process to form a new vision which will address new and existing neighborhoods and will support a diverse range of housing choices and receive equal share of public investment
- Recommended that the Council defers approval of the 2 grant awards today to allow for more public input

Dr. Kim Koo

- Stated she is a member of the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission
- Stated she would like to echo what Ms. Cole said about a deferment of a decision made on items 11 and 12
- Stated she puts them together because both items are sponsored by and to be developed by NSV, the amount that was asked totaled \$1.6 million not \$500,000 for each of the 2 projects
- Stated there were additional sums that were requested like roof grant, facade improvement grants, downtown building assistant grants and resident production grants and this is the same for the next item
- Stated item 11 asked for funding from the City at the sum of \$690,000 and the second part number 12 comes up to \$915,000 totaling \$1.6 million
- Stated there is no discussion on the impact on affordable housing and she would like to know how they are going to make the 16 and 20 apartments upstairs to fit the affordable picture
- Stated in the Rocky Mount Telegram, Benton Moss mentioned residents in Raleigh who want to live here and she is concerned about Rocky Mount becoming gentrified
- Asked what happened to all the planning that was made on the Atlantic Arlington corridor which is supposed to help Edgemont side of Rocky Mount out in the development
- Stated there is no public input about this whole venture that is going to cost \$1.5 million of public money, how does this fit in with the housing plan that was proposed
- Stated it is her understanding that there was going to be a comprehensive housing plan and the City was going to put forth \$1 million to the consultants and none of this was proposed to the Workforce Housing Advisory Commission
- Stated for these reasons she hopes Councilmembers will defer voting on this issue

Moe Deloach

- Stated he is excited about the things that are happening downtown but he would like to see if there are any updates on the lighting downtown as it is very dark
- Stated he thinks a high-tech camera system would also be beneficial

Councilmember Knight asked how many of those apartments would be affordable.

Andrew Holton with NSV responded that none are scheduled to be affordable at this time. He explained that they do have a track record of working with units of government to provide workforce housing and are very supportive of those efforts here, but based on the construction prices today and rehabilitation costs they are having a hard time making the model work sort of subsidizing the units the way they have in other markets. He explained they have talked to staff about ways they can work with the City and potentially develop either a

workforce housing specific project or another development that blends multiple price points within the housing spectrum. He stated that they are very supportive of that and they think it is admirable that the Council and the advocacy community is so vocal about that issue and they have a good track record of working with units of government in multiple jurisdictions and they hope to do that in Rocky Mount as well.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he appreciates the discussion but one thing that they are understanding is that they have to live in the world of both and. He stated that they just do not expect everything related to people who do not have great means to be pushed to the back while everyone else is pushed to the front of the class. He explained that his hopes are that Council will support this project, but he feels as if there are so many uncommunicated priorities set in the housing arena. He stated there is no clarity around what their housing initiatives are, where their priorities lie, and where the projects are that they are looking at. He asked Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge to schedule some specific time on the Committee of the Whole agenda to discuss setting housing priorities. He stated that he is also familiar with another project that is downtown that has petitioned for these funds as well which is the old Memorial Hospital on Rose and Atlantic Avenue. He explained that he thinks that project has a merit to be discussed. He stated he hope a discussion and vote will happen soon since they have already gone through the process and obtained financing and a building permit. He stated that ultimately he feels like they have got to do it all and they also have to plan for businesses that do not have historical access to equity or financing. He continued stating that he believes that the City has enough partnerships with financial institutions that they can begin to work with those bankers, investors, and funding entities to create programs to help people get access to capital. He explained that while people have a great vision and are willing to put in the work, they may need access to money as everyone does not have that. He stated that he is excited that this group has that access and he is supportive of that. He stated he is also supportive of building a bridge so others can have that same access as well. He stated that he is asking for a very robust and collaborative housing program that encompasses both downtown as well as inner City communities as it is essential. He explained that he believes they can do it and he feels if they do not, they will find themselves crowing about how nice our downtown is then having homeless populations increase exponentially. He expressed that he is all for doing both and.

Councilmember Knight stated to differentiate between the downtown major investment grant that they are voting on tonight, he thinks it is different than the Council initiatives. He explained that in recent years the projects that received the Council initiative money had to

have affordable units in those projects. He stated this money is not Council initiative and what he would like to say is that July 11, 2022 the Council did approve \$1.5 million dollars of the ARPA money going to housing. He explained that \$300,000 of the ARPA funds were supposed to go to urgent housing repair - \$50,000, housing repair - \$50,000, workforce housing - \$50,000, matching rebate - \$25,000, community wealth building -\$225,000, and down payment assistance - \$100,000. He stated that the community has had a lot of input in these discussions but have not received any updates, nor has Council. He continued stating that he is hoping that these issues will be addressed and lay out the amount of money that has been allocated and the amount that has not and get the housing initiative back on track. He explained that he is excited about downtown, but he is also excited about other projects in the hopper as well that have not been presented. He stated hopefully they will be discussed in the Committee of the Whole and the discussion will include affordable workforce housing as well.

Motion was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the downtown major investment award be approved and the Mayor or City Manager and City Clerk be authorized to execute agreement on behalf of the City (pending legal review). **Ordinance No. O-2024-3** entitled **BUDGET ORDINANCE RELATIVE TO A DOWNTOWN MAJOR DEVELOPMENT GRANT FOR 201 S. WASHINGTON STREET (500,000)** was adopted.

PUBLIC HEARING/DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT GRANT/204-232 SW MAIN STREET

The Mayor opened up a public hearing relative to a downtown major development grant for 204-232 SW Main Street in the amount of \$500,000.

Benton Moss of NSV stated that this is the second project that is on the agenda which is 20 units on the 2nd floor, market rate apartment units and another 17,000 square feet of commercial retail which could be office, restaurants, bars, any number of businesses. He stated that this is a mixed-use project that they are very excited about right on the main street in downtown Rocky Mount.

Councilmember Knight asked the Mayor Pro Tem to add housing as part of the discussion at the next Committee of the Whole.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated they will certainly talk about housing like they have since he has been on this Council but he does want to get insight from the City Manager about the study that is going to be taking place and what is going to be part of that study because he would assume that study is also going to include some public input. He explained that he has a meeting with the City Manager so he will sit down and talk with him but they certainly recognize that it is a priority for the City Council. He stated while he cannot guarantee it for the next Committee of the Whole, they will certainly discuss it.

Councilmember Knight stated the reason he is saying that is because they have had Sue Perry Cole in Workforce Housing who has been

meeting for years and they have been participating and entrusting the Council to do the right things. He explained that they are seeing things that are happening in the City not including workforce housing and the things they spent countless time on. He asked that Council make a commitment to address the concerns of the citizens after they discuss the budget and see where the money is according to the priority that has been set for this Council as some of this money has not been allocated to the community development fund.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated just for clarification that the next Committee of the Whole is going to include the audit not the budget necessarily.

Councilmember Jabaris Walker stated he agrees with Councilmember Knight and feels March/April they can discuss housing. He stated that he was running this morning in the neighborhood, he ran on Highland Avenue and East End Church is building a beautiful house on the corner of Highland and he thanked them for what they are doing in that community. He explained it is an area that has been crying for help for a long time and as he sits on this City Council he will do his best to try to address the issue.

Councilmember Blackwell thanked Councilmember Jabaris Walker for recognizing the efforts underway. He explained that is another reason why they have to be very clear with the public about what the housing agenda priorities are and where the money is allocated. He stated they have already made decisions in the past about where to put it, they just want to know if it is still there and what the process is to get it. He explained that there are neighborhoods that can flourish rather than deteriorate. He continued stating that there are private sector developers who are willing to partner with the City but we do not necessarily have clarity about who is doing what, where the money is, what the time tables are, and what the balances are. He stated that he is inspired that Mayor Pro Tem Daughtridge is having a whole meeting set on the budget and he will be specifically looking for what is allocated to housing and business development in inner City communities. He expressed that he supports this project, the hospital project, as well as every development project that they have outside of downtown and in downtown as well. He stated that Council just needs to know what the deal is and where the projects are so there is not this sliding scale that changes every time you talk to a different person. He explained that he is looking for specificity and then clarity in the process, who you talk to, and what it takes to get funded so they can go ahead and start rebuilding Rocky Mount. He stated they have had the foot on pause for too long and it is time to move forward so his vote is yes.

Councilmember Harris stated it might be best that they look at having the discussion at an upcoming retreat instead of a Committee of

the Whole meeting which is only an hour or two. He feels they should allocate a half day or more on this very important topic.

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Jabaris Walker and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes/0 nays) that the downtown major investment award be approved and the Mayor or City Manager and City Clerk be authorized to execute agreement on behalf of the City (pending legal review). **Ordinance No. O-2024-4** entitled **BUDGET ORDINANCE RELATIVE TO A DOWNTOWN MAJOR DEVELOPMENT GRANT FOR 204-232 SW MAIN STREET (500,000)** was adopted.

A. PUBLIC HEARING/AUTHORIZING THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

The Mayor opened a public hearing relative to authorizing the acquisition of the following real property for economic development purposes:

- 336 acres located in an area bounded on the west by North Old Carriage Road, on the north by U.S. 64, on the east by Interstate 95, and on the south by Dozier Road and Sunset Avenue

Dr. Kim Koo

- Stated the City is asking to borrow \$17 million dollars from PNC in order to buy 336 acres of land located in Nash County
- Stated this is just the purchase of the land so how much more are they going to be asking from the City if development happens
- Stated she sees very little effort to try and develop the Edgecombe County side of Rocky Mount, citizens of both Nash and Edgecombe counties pay taxes to the cities
- Stated if more effort is put into developing Edgecombe County then we will actually raise people from poverty
- Stated her concern is always paying attention to and enriching the Nash side of the City while Edgecombe gets poorer

Iris Thompson

- Asked if anymore development is going to happen in the area near Legget Park/Emerald Lane

No one else from the public appeared and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

PUBLIC HEARING/EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF THE INSTALLMENT FINANCING CONTRACT TO FINANCE PROPERTY ACQUISITION

The Mayor opened up a public hearing relative to the execution and delivery of the installment financing contract to finance property acquisition:

- 59-month term with PNC Bank
- First year of financing (interest only) rate to be set 2 weeks prior to closing (currently estimated at 5.7%)
- Proposed financing for \$15,413,000 - \$15,200,000 reserved for land acquisition and \$213,000 applied to financing costs
- Total costs, including the negotiation of the non-optioned parcel will be no greater than \$17,000,000

No one from the public appeared and the Mayor declared the public hearing closed.

Councilmember Knight stated Council is voting on a \$17 million dollar land deal for economic development and when it came to Council it was a very tense meeting, but it was agreed it was for the betterment of Rocky Mount. He also stated an economic development project on the east side of town was discussed and Council instructed the City Manager to do some research, so he wanted to make sure that was still being worked on. He stated that hopefully soon they will have something on the table that addresses some of the questions that citizens have had tonight. He stated he is supporting this land deal and is hopeful that something will be brought back to the community as well.

Councilmember Blackwell stated that he agrees with Councilmember Knight. He stated while they want to see development escalate in places where it is more market ready, they know that they have to incent and invest in those places that have been divested intentionally, ignored, or not valued as highly as other places. He stated he is very excited about this opportunity because it does open doors for rapid growth for the City, which everyone should be able to benefit from, he feels the same level of emphasis and effort needs to happen to rebuild broken places within the City. He mentioned to Mayor Pro Tem Daughtride that if they have to get in a few extra Committee of the Whole meetings to make up for some of the lag, he is okay with that too.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtride, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes, 0 nays) that **Resolution No. R-2024-7** entitled **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES AND THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF AN INSTALLMENT FINANCING CONTRACT TO FINANCE SUCH ACQUISITION** was adopted.

C. PROJECT ORDINANCE/LAND ACQUISITION/PROJECT WINNER

City Council received a Project Ordinance appropriating funds to the Economic Development Fund for the land acquisition for Project Winner (17,000,000).

Councilmember Knight stated he supports the project, but he is also still supporting the pay increases for the City workers/ sanitation workers and hopes that issue is not dead and money will be found for the increases as well.

Councilmember Blackwell stated that he wants to join with Councilmember Knight in his concern for sanitation workers and City workers who are at the bottom of the pay scale and what the strategy is to bring them up higher. He explained that he would like to see more discussion about the issue. He asked that more in-depth discussion and evaluation occur about how all of the team members are compensated, who they are, what their purpose is and how they benefit the public. He explained that he is in favor of the motion with the caveat that they

will be looking at every area closely related to the expenditures and investments.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes, 0 nays) that Project **Ordinance No. O-2024-5** entitled **PROJECT ORDINANCE LAND ACQUISITION/PROJECT WINNER** be adopted.

CHAPTER 14 ENTITLED "MISCELLANEOUS OFFENSES"/CODE AMENDMENT

The City Council was provided with an amendment to Chapter 14 of the City Code entitled "Miscellaneous Offenses" to provide for criminal enforcement of certain City ordinances.

Councilmember Joyner requested an explanation of what this really is and why it is being done.

City Attorney Rose explained that the law for many years in North Carolina was when a municipality adopted an ordinance that it was automatically a misdemeanor and could be criminally enforced. He continued stating that changed recently and the opposite is in place, now if you want to enforce your ordinance criminally you have to say so in the ordinance and you have to go back and adopt those ordinances where it was not in there before. He explained that this ordinance amendment is adding the statement to allow criminal enforcement. He stated the ordinance is being introduced today and will come back to City Council at the next meeting for final adoption.

Councilmember Knight stated he just wants the citizens to be clear on those ordinances that are about to be adopted because a lot of those are going to affect them directly. He stated one of these matters that will be voted on will state that nothing can be placed on City owned telegram or utility poles. He stated he just wants to point that out to the Councilmembers and ensure they know what they are voting on because constituents will be asking questions.

Councilmember Blackwell stated that he has a similar concern about the actual policing of these. He inquired if there is a permitting process in order to put anything on a City structure like a telephone pole or does this mean that none of that should happen at all.

City Attorney Rose stated he thinks it was prohibited because it is hard to keep it off as anybody can put anything on a telephone pole, you need some regulations, but it is possible they can do a permitting procedure.

Councilmember Blackwell stated there is a bunch of stuff on poles right now so do you tear it off, are the police going to contact people, he asked how that will be operationalized and if this is going to be a priority from real crimes. He explained if they pass these ordinances that have the ability to censure and give people criminal records, they have to also be concerned about how they are going to monitor this. He explained that they want to be sure that some people are not being targeted and others are getting a pass. He asked the

professionals to give Council some insight on how they plan to operationalize this ordinance/amendment.

City Attorney Rose stated with this amendment, there is really no change in the ordinance as you could enforce it by a civil penalty before and this just lets you enforce it criminally. He explained that he is not sure that a whole lot will change but that is up to the police department.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated that he agrees with the robust discussion that they need to enforce rules and regulations and ordinances that are in the books that are not being enforced. He stated that is one of the discussions that he will put on Committee of the Whole which includes littering, speeding and putting signs out without a sign permit. He explained that there are many rules and regulations, not only in the City of Rocky Mount, but across the country that are not enforced. He further explained that he is not saying that they should not be enforced but his understanding is they are getting their ordinances in line with the state when the state made a change.

Councilmember Knight asked for clarification on what a cottonwood tree is. City Attorney Rose stated that portion of the amendment could be reviewed prior to the ordinance amendment being brought back to Council for final approval.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and passed by a roll call vote of 5-2 (Councilmembers Joyner, T.J. Walker, Daughtridge, Jabaris Walker, Harris ayes; Councilmembers Knight and Blackwell nays) that the first reading introducing the Ordinance Amending Chapter 14 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Rocky Mount to Provide for the Criminal Enforcement of Certain City Ordinances be approved. It was noted that the ordinance will return for final City Council approval February 12, 2024.

Councilmember Joyner stated he has been having a lot of questions around demolition, especially regarding homes that have been burned and have been there for a long time. He requested an update as far as what is being done because there are a lot of homes that have been burned and have been there for years that Council has been trying to get moved.

City Manager Rogers stated he is aware of some of those instances as well and staff is in the process making sure that any structure that has significant damage, can either be demolished or secured so that it is no longer a threat to life, health and safety.

He confirmed that those efforts are underway and anytime there is a property in question, please let him know.

Councilmember Knight stated there was one mentioned on Woodland Avenue that was on WITN that has not been before Council.

Mayor Roberson reopened the Public Petitions portion of the meeting. The individuals who spoke are as follows:

Sydney Meeks

- Stated last Monday was Martin Luther King, Jr. Day which is considered a day of action, where everyone is encouraged to participate in community service projects, programs and education themselves on who Dr. King truly was
- Asked that Arnie Jones be reinstated as she feels he was unfairly fired from his job and was the one person from his department that was speaking out day after day, meeting after meeting
- Stated the NAACP stands behind him and supports him
- Stated that in a time where inflation is on the rise, \$15 an hour even with a dollar increase does not help you finance your home, pay for your kid's needs for school, pay for gas etc.
- Stated the City needs to do better

Julia Nelson

- Stated her and her husband are huge supporters of public schools
- Stated she is here to bring attention to Nash County Public Schools demerger
- Stated this is extremely important and she is asking the City Council to throw themselves into our City schools
- Stated better schools equal better communities and if we want to bring people to Rocky Mount we have to invest in our City schools
- Stated the demerger plans to make Edwards Middle School into an elementary school which has been the middle school there for 60 plus years and the facility is not suitable for elementary kids at all
- Stated she is also concerned about the location of Rocky Mount Middle School

Sharon Evans

- Commended the Council for their work and efforts in what they have done so far
- Stated she is referencing how they have taken an ordinary man that has been working almost 20 years for the City of Rocky Mount and elevated him because of what they have not done
- Stated they have time to say that they are going to borrow \$11 million for a fire department, \$17 million for land but they cannot find \$500,000 to increase the pay for City workers
- Stated it was said that sanitation workers are supposed to be making \$40,000 a year which should be at least \$19.23 an hour, so if they are not making that then someone is lying
- Stated the citizens have been asking since June about the increase for the City workers with no answer yet people are being brought in making \$150,000 and \$200,000 a year
- State retaliation is against the law and she feels Arnie Jones has been retaliated against

Curmilus Dancy

- Stated he sees that people can be escorted out but he has felt threatened twice in the same room and nothing happened
- Stated the fight is bigger than Arnie Jones as the majority of sanitation and City workers are black and the increase has created a division among them

- Stated to clear the chamber because people are clapping in support of a good cause is crazy to him

Nathlyn Ohree.

- Stated as a long-time citizen of Rocky Mount, she has watched many things change over the years
- Stated the concerns she brings forth today are in regard to environmental services and sanitation departments
- Stated they have had debates on what they feel are fair wages for these employees and they now have concerns about not only the employees but the financial practices within the public works department
- Stated they have noticed many green garbage dumpsters around the City at various places which are not provided by the City and that is a service that should be provided by environmental services
- Stated one day they will be a thing of the past just like the Rocky Mount school system and Rocky Mount Transit, she stated the Rocky Mount name is systematically being erased
- Thanked Chief Hassel for coming to her community meeting last week and having the light installed at Food Lion and helping the community

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried by a roll call vote (7 ayes, 0 nays) that the meeting be adjourned at 5:44 p.m.



Kim Batts
City Clerk