

February 12, 2024

The City Council of the City of Rocky Mount met this day in a regular session scheduled for 7:00 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.

Staff present: Keith Rogers Jr., City Manager; Kim Batts, City Clerk; Elton Daniels, Assistant City Manager; Emilie Pinkston, Director of the Department of Development Services; Archie Jones, Director of Human Relations; Darvin Moore, Fire Chief; Mike Baughn, Central Services Director; Robert Hassell, Police Chief; Mark Adcox, Video Production Specialist; Robin Cox, Communications Specialist; 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 7:02 p.m. and requested all in attendance to stand for a moment of silent prayer.

Mayor Roberson congratulated Councilmember Blackwell who was recently appointed, nominated, and recognized as one of the top executive directors of OIC of America.

#### **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 25, 2023 be approved as submitted to the City Council prior to the meeting.

#### **APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA**

Councilmember Knight made a request to amend the agenda to:

- request to approve demolition of certain dwellings (*request was withdrawn by Councilmember Knight to allow for information on properties to be brought back to City Council*)

#### **Council Comments:**

Councilmember Knight-

- Stated he has been getting calls from citizens in reference to fire damaged houses located throughout the community that have been damaged for a very long time and one structurally damaged house that neighbors are concerned will collapse any time
- Stated he noticed Council has not been brought any houses for demolition in quite some time
- Stated he would like to pass a list to Council that includes fire damaged houses on Zinnia Court, Pender Street, East Highland Street and Discovery Street
- Stated the major structural damaged house is located on Woodland and that house was on the local news station
- Stated he thinks if Council does not have staff bring those severely damaged houses before them they could be liable if

someone were to get hurt in those properties, especially if they have been reported to the City

- Stated if added to the agenda, they could discuss how to move forward in addressing these burnout and structural damaged houses in the communities
- Stated at one point when a house caught on fire and the insurance or property owner did not take care of it then the City would just demolish it because it was a danger and eyesore

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner to add the item to the agenda for discussion, seconded by Councilmember Blackwell.

Councilmember Daughtridge-

- Stated he is not opposed but they do not know the expense and he would like to know that prior to making any decisions as there are other homes that may be in the same condition or worse that they need to address
- Asked what makes these priority
- Stated he would like to have these on a future agenda, Committee of the Whole, or a report before they make a decision because there might be a house in worse condition than these or maybe they can do them all
- Stated he does not disagree with the concept, it is the monetary concern that he has and if it is within the budget

Councilmember Blackwell-

- Stated he definitely supports cleaning up our neighborhoods and he thought that some of these properties were already on lists but he does not recall any properties coming before City Council for a vote recently
- Stated he would like to know if there is money that has been allocated; if code enforcement is happening and if there is still a backlog
- Stated he does not recall any recent demolition ordinances and often times people look at the Council for things that happen so it would be helpful if they could get an update
- Stated he agrees with both Councilmembers Knight and Daughtridge and he would like to also know if there is the list of dilapidated, beyond repair houses and what is the terminology for that would be

City Manager Rogers responded that the first step is to secure and rehabilitate and if that is not possible then they would move to demolition. He stated that is still the current process and he just had a discussion with staff last week regarding a list that they are looking at and verifying the age of some of the properties. He explained that staff regularly goes out and secures properties which involves boarding them up and if they find that there is not a potential for rehabilitation then they would bring that list of properties to Council to approve the demolition. He stated he has the list here and he is happy to follow up with Council on what can be done or the current status of these properties and go from there.

Councilmember Knight-

- Asked when Council cannot get staff to bring items forth for action then what other course do they take as a Council

- Stated there are citizens who are very concerned and continuously talk about 620 Woodland Avenue, it has been in the news and the 2 well-kept homes beside this house have a serious issue if this house is not demolished because this house could fall on their property and kill somebody then they could sue the City as he has made it public now
- Stated they have had over \$200,000 in demolition and now it is reduced to less than \$100,000
- Stated they have money in the budget and they need to use the money that City Council approved to demolish these homes

Councilmember T.J. Walker-

- Stated he supports it as well but he wants to make sure that it is well communicated from here about the process moving forward because what is going to happen is people are going to call about different properties in each Ward.
- Stated what he tells constituents in his Ward is that there is a comprehensive strategic plan that is underway and funding is allocated for a certain amount of demolition
- Stated he has no issue with this tonight but moving forward he thinks they will see more of this so they have to figure out what the process is moving forward as next meeting there may be 6 or 7 properties wanting the same thing and if they do not have the funding then they find themselves in a situation
- Stated he is in support of the addition tonight

Mayor Roberson called for a vote on the addition of the item to the agenda. Councilmember Daughtridge opposed.

Councilmember Knight stated he felt this matter could be handled by providing the list he brought forward to the City Manager and request the information be brought back to the City Council including a list of dilapidated properties.

#### **COMMUNITY UPDATE BY CITY MANAGER**

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

- Stated on Tuesday February 13<sup>th</sup>, the City of Rocky Mount in collaboration with the Edgecombe County Cooperative Extension will begin hosting our Community Garden Workshop series
- Stated the first kickoff meeting will be February 13 at the Booker T Theater downtown and this 7-part series is designed to help all participants to enhance their knowledge and skills to create flourishing community gardens
- Stated on Friday February 16 at 7:30 p.m. Risen Voices will take the stage at the Booker T. Theater and this is a free public poetry slam and spoken word event honoring Black History Month

#### **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

The Mayor read a Proclamation proclaiming the month of February 2024 as "Black History Month" in the City of Rocky Mount and presented the proclamation to Human Relations Director Archie Jones who joined the Mayor for a photograph.

Councilmember Knight stated that was a very powerful proclamation and made a motion to turn the proclamation into a resolution on behalf of the City of Rocky Mount. He asked that the resolution include partnerships with banks to create an accessible

capital for black and brown communities, full staffing and funding for the minority women and business department to achieve measurable outcome, employment of a dedicated grant writer for downtown initiative to form a community wealth committee, a comprehensive review an implementation of strategy from the City Start initiative. Councilmember Joyner seconded the motion.

Councilmember Blackwell stated he loves making ideals realities and he agrees with Councilmember Knight that whoever drafted the proclamation did a beautiful job and captured the spirit of where we are and where we should be not only as a City but as a Nation. He explained that he is pleased that our City is not afraid to withstand the concept that is proliferating and being avidly, openly and vehemently discussed about the lack of attention paid to righting past wrongs and creating an environment where everyone feels valued and welcome in integral parts of society. He stated he also feels there are a lot of things taking place within our City that need direct attention and conversation and he thinks communication and discussion is absolutely important, but he thinks creating action plans to reverse trends is even more important. He stated that the outline that Councilmember Knight provided, he is excited about it and he is wondering how they adopt it without fleshing it out so maybe during the retreat or Committee of the Whole there can be discussion about making these things real.

Councilmember Knight stated maybe the Mayor should just present but then he thinks Council should at least go back and put in the points he just made to make it a reality. He thanked the Mayor the Proclamation and stated he appreciates the Mayor for bringing the Proclamation tonight as it was very powerful but he would like to see that document become a living document with action items that this City would make sure we have in place to reach the points that the Mayor made in the proclamation.

Councilmember Harris stated he is glad that they might revisit this in two weeks. He expressed that things like this are certainly worthy.

Councilmember Harris stated he feels it would be good if they could learn what financial institutions here in town have done over the last 3 to 5 years as that would help as they strategize how to move forward.

#### **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:

#### ***Loretta Braswell***

- Thanked the City of Rocky Mount for an honor that she recently received

- Stated it reminds her of 49 years ago when she came to the City as a volunteer action coordinator, then she became a human relations specialist, to an assistant director, then finally a human relations director and she is proud of the work she has done during the last 49 years
- Stated she has been hearing that she was fired and she wants to set the record straight that she was not fired
- Stated she was told that after Citizens Academy finishes that she would not have any work to do, but she was not fired

Councilmember Harris stated that he has known Ms. Braswell for about a year and a half, and he was fortunate to go through Citizens Academy. He stated that he really benefited from her leadership and attending Citizens Academy and he is so pleased that her name is now associated with the program.

Councilmember Knight stated that he is excited that they are recognizing Ms. Loretta Braswell as he has known her for a long time. He explained that when he read the news it was a little bittersweet because the Council did not play a part in that and he thinks that as a Council they could have recognized Ms. Braswell in a much better way. He stated his reason for saying that is because when you name a program after someone, that program could cease to exist. He stated he would think, especially if the Council was a part of this celebration that they should at least name maybe the atrium on the second floor Ms. Loretta Braswell and put her picture up like Helen Gay in a bronze. He explained that is more justice than a program and she deserves more than that. He expressed that he is a little disappointed as a Councilmember that he was not part of that planning. He stated all of them who love her so dearly want to make sure that if a program goes away that her picture will be in City Hall as long as it stands as she deserves it and she has earned it. He explained that it is the job of the Mayor and Council to name anything and it is a recommendation that comes from the City Manager.

Councilmember Knight requested to make a motion to honor Loretta Marie Braswell by having her plaque memorialized on the second floor between human relations and community development where she started and still remains.

Mayor Roberson stated they would have to address the request at a later time due to the item not being added to the agenda.

### ***Curmilus Dancy***

- Congratulated Ms. Braswell and he agrees with Councilmember Knight
- Stated the Committee of the Whole meeting had some great information with the audit report and police report
- Requested that the City workers especially Environmental Services get an increase as it appears that money is found for other areas, staff, property, etc.
- Stated it appears that somebody is making decisions and spending money without sharing it with the Council, asked where is the transparency
- Stated the Edgecombe County Sheriff's office has a lot more responsibilities than Rocky Mount Police Department

- Stated the division that comes in Rocky Mount comes from this Council

***Dr. Kim Koo***

- Stated the recent announcement by the Mayor Pro Tem to go back to the basics sounds reasonable and compelling
- Stated the basics were listed to include security services, parks and recreation, public works and utilities
- Stated there was no mention of affordable housing or how to tackle the current housing crisis in this area
- Stated for many citizens housing is a basic need
- Stated affordable housing is as essential as affordable healthcare, sound education and equitable employment paying living wages
- Stated she hopes Council will reconsider as what they see as basic as they face harder times ahead
- Stated the failing economy will surely have a huge impact on funding and she urges for more attention to be paid to human needs

***Richard Petway***

- Asked why the pay increase for City workers cannot be put back on the agenda so Council can vote on it
- Stated they need better working conditions for the City Workers in Rocky Mount
- Asked for Arnie Jones to be reinstated and give the City workers a 25% pay raise and a 6% COLA increase

Mayor Roberson stated public petitions will be reopened at the end of the meeting so city business could be expedited.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion was made by Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Councilmember Daughtridge, and unanimously carried that the Consent Agenda [Items 9(A) through 9(C), be approved as follows and more specifically:

**A. AWARD OF DUTY BADGE/SIDEARM**

That the award of Duty Badge and Sidearm to Police Captain Christopher Ballard for 30 Years of Dedicated Service was approved.

**B. TAXICAB/LICENSE RENEWALS**

The City Council received recommendations from Chief of Police Robert Hassell for the following taxicab license renewals and new licenses as follows:

- |                        |                 |                    |                   |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| • Christopher R. Baker | Rocky Mount Cab | 11,12 (2-Renewals) | One<br>Additional |
| • Denise Alisha Hunter | Rocky Mount Cab | 53 (Renewal)       | One<br>Additional |
| • Tommie G. Hedgepeth  | Rocky Mount Cab | 1 (Renewal)        |                   |
| • Rufus Carter Seabron | Rocky Mount Cab | 59 (New)           |                   |

By consent, the Taxicab Licenses and Renewals were approved and the City Clerk authorized to execute the applications certifying City Council approval.

**C. INSTALLMENT FINANCING AGREEMENT/FIRESTATION #2**

City Council was advised that a public hearing was held on January 22, 2024 on the City’s intent to finance the construction of a replacement facility for Fire Station #2 at a cost not to exceed \$11,400,000 million.

City Council was informed that the total proposed financing is estimated at approximately \$11,400,000 consists of the following item:

PROJECT	FUND	ESTIMATD COST	TERMS (MONTHS)
Fire Station 2	General	\$11,400,000	240

The Council was advised that the most favorable rate was received from Banc of America Public Capital Corp which proposes to finance the construction improvements at the fixed interest rate of 4.3203% for 240 months.

**Resolution No. R-2024-8** entitled **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF AN INSTALLMENT FINANCING AGREEMENT TO FINANCE THE CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPPING OF A FIRE STATION TO REPLACE THE CITY’S EXISTING FIRE STATION #2** was adopted.

This resolution accepts the proposal from Banc of America Public Capital Corp, authorizes the City Manager and the Director of Finance and any other officer of Lessee who shall have power to execute contracts on behalf of Lessee, and each of them, to execute the Agreement required in connection with the financing; and authorizes the City Clerk of Lessee, and any other officer of Lessee who shall have power to do so, to affix the official seal of Lessee to said Agreement and to attest the same.

**Ordinance No. O-2024-6** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR FY 2023-2024 FOR REPLACEMENT OF FIRE STATION #2** (appropriates \$11,524,947 in the General Capital Fund) was adopted.

**PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

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 and January 22, 2024 City Council Meetings.

Emilie Pinkston, Director of Development Services gave an overview of the request.

Councilmember Blackwell thanked Mrs. Pinkston for her presentation. He stated he has received calls regarding how the

property would look, he is aware they do not have design standards yet but in other situations like this they have received assurance from the developer that there would be certain standards that they would adhere to. He explained that they have seen the developers follow through on what they promised, the most recent one that he can recall is the storage facility that was built near Candlewood.

Councilmember Daughtridge stated that was many years ago and the person met with the neighborhood.

Councilmember Blackwell stated that they did not have standards that they imposed, the community said this is what we are looking for and the developer understood and he delivered. He explained from his understanding, the neighbors who live in the community, the only thing they have is existing property that the current petitioner owns that they are concerned about the same thing occurring in their neighborhood. He stated by them saying they do not want to have a junkyard in their neighborhood, he thinks that spills over into saying that they do not have confidence that the petitioner will honestly do what he says he is going to do.

Emilie Pinkston responded stating the Land Development Code does not have architectural standards that extend this far along Raleigh Boulevard which turns into US 64 Alternate here. She explained that it does have architectural standards that apply along some other corridors in the community. She stated that the applicant does have a visualization that he would like to show this evening, however anything presented would not necessarily be required unless the Land Development Code specifically requires it. She stated the only way to ensure that a particular development has a particular design characteristic or design standards that go above and beyond what is required in the Land Development Code is to attach conditions upon the proposed rezoning. She continued stating that the state statute does allow for conditions to be attached to rezonings with the applicant's consent.

Mayor Roberson recognized the following who wished to speak on the item:

***Cynthia Jones***

- Stated she is here on behalf on the Springfield Road neighborhood committee
- Stated the rezoning request located on Springfield Road is not what the residents would like to see the City Council to approve
- Stated this corner is a high traffic corridor for their community and frequent travelers
- Stated they would not like to see the proposed U-Haul rental business at this location due to the current appearance that Councilmember Blackwell just addressed at 715 and 803 Cokey Road of which the property owner is operating a U-Haul business along with an automotive repair business
- Asked if the Councilmembers are aware or have seen these 2 properties (provided pictures on her ipad for Council to look at)

- Stated the pictures were taken during the day when the business was operating, stated they would not want to see the signage, there is not paved parking, no vegetation and the property is located across the street from a place of worship
- Stated they are not against development, especially in Edgecombe County, but Edgecombe County needs the right development that would encourage other industries to come to the Edgecombe City side of Rocky Mount
- Recommended that the request be denied so that development can occur within allowable permitted uses which would allow the developer (which he shared at the meeting that he would consider) operate a grocery store which is needed in the neighborhood
- Recommended that when a rezoning request such as this is made, the area that the notice is sent out to the surrounding community be extended beyond the 250 feet of the existing property and the signage be larger to include the word “rezoning” so the community is aware that a rezoning request is under consideration not just a public hearing
- Stated she understands planning and she understands what a public hearing is, but she did not know herself that this request was being made until she called the planning department, not by looking at the sign

***Linda Daughtride Ruffin***

- Stated she lives diagonal from the property and has been there since her daddy built the house in 1949
- Stated she is wondering if it is rezoned what could come later as it opens the door for so many things that could not go there the way it is currently zoned
- Stated she would really hate to see anything go over there that is going to make the community look bad

***Omar Bayyari***

- Stated his father purchased this property almost 30-40 years ago and it has been rented out to almost 100 tenants since then
- Stated he was 19 when his father lost everything and he started this business by himself
- Stated everyone knows him in the community as he gives back to the whole community
- Stated he tries to please everybody and he is not a hard guy to get along with as he stays within the rules

***Regina Townsend***

- Stated she has been in Rocky Mount for quite some time now and the property that he is talking about has become an eyesore to the community
- Stated she does not believe that building the petitioner has proposed will stay in that condition, she believes it will look just like Cokey Road
- Stated she does not trust what he is saying and he can take it to the other side of town because they do not want it

***George Birth***

- Stated they do not want this property to be rezoned because their homes are out there and it will decrease the value
- Stated all the years they worked to get the community to where it is, he cannot see anyone coming into that neighborhood to put up a garage because it is not going to stay that way
- Stated he hopes this City Council will understand that and they will not approve the rezoning of the property

*Yousef*

- Stated this property is completely empty so everything will be brand new including the building, U-Hauls, pavement, etc.
- Asked if there were any other pictures taken of any other eyesores on Cokey Road since Cokey Road has many old buildings and other eyesores that make other stuff look bad
- Stated as far as maintaining business and maintaining everything on Cokey Road, they do their best and they do give back to the community as well
- Stated he hopes Council takes it into consideration

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

Motion to refer this item back to the Planning Board and have petitioner get information out to the community and staff so everyone would have ample time to review the rendering and ask questions before a joint meeting with the Planning Board and the City Council was made by Councilmember Knight, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried.

It was noted that a date would be set for joint meeting at a later time.

**ANNEXATION NO. 332 - HARPER & WILLIAM (SUNSET AVENUE)**

The Mayor stated the recommended action for this item was to postpone the matter until the April 8, 2024 city council meeting.

It was noted that this item was postponed from January 8, 20204 City Council meeting.

Public hearing relative to Annexation No. 332 - Harper & William (Sunset Avenue) and feasibility study.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Harris and unanimously carried that the item be postponed to April 8, 2024 City Council meeting.

**PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

The Mayor stated the recommended action for this item was to postpone the matter until the April 8, 2024 city council meeting.

It was noted that this item was postponed from January 8, 20204 City Council meeting.

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 Thomas White (Axiom Development, LLC) to rezone a +48.9-acre parcel, having a PIN 382008972953U and a +9.45-acre portion of the property having a PIN 382012960747 from I-2 (Heavy Industrial District) and GI (Nash County General Industrial) to R-6MFA (Multifamily Residential District)

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the item be postponed to April 8, 2024 City Council meeting.

#### **PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council received the minutes and recommendations from a Planning Board meeting held January 9, 2024.

The following action was taken upon the recommendations of the Planning Board:

#### **PUBLIC HEARING/REZONING REQUEST**

The Mayor opened 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 Chad J. Post, Rocky Mount (Winstead Ave.) WW, LLC to rezone a 7.78-acre site at 551 N. Winstead Avenue and 2320 & 2400 Professional Drive from O-I (Office and Institutional District) to B-2CD (Conditional Commercial Corridor District), with conditions limiting the permitted uses, prohibiting vehicle access from Professional Drive, and requiring specific buffering from adjoining property

Emilie Pinkston, Director of Development Services, gave an overview of the request.

Mayor Roberson recognized the following who wished to speak on the item:

#### ***Clint Cogburn***

- Stated he is a land use attorney with the law firm Orton Smith on behalf of the applicant
- Stated he appreciates staff's summary and report that detailed both the rezoning request and the detailed conditions that were put together
- Stated he would like to speak with Council about the process that went into that because there has been prior discussion about community input and that is something that they have taken seriously in this request
- Stated the full team is in attendance tonight and introduced them briefly
- Stated there are three separate uses proposed for this track, one being a Wawa convenience store, the second being a Texas Roadhouse, and the third although not finalized is expected to be a fast casual restaurant
- Stated they have limited substantially the uses that are permitted at this site to only a select few categories which are restaurants, offices and interior storage
- Stated to the extent that the fast casual restaurant does not end up materializing a replacement use for that third use will be based upon those stated uses in their conditions
- Stated they have worked extensively with the community members and nearby stakeholders in terms of refining this request
- Stated they had a neighborhood meeting in late November where they heard concerns about the impact to Professional Drive, access to the property, and the impact to surrounding property owners
- Stated they have had extensive discussions with the hospital and certain professional offices along Professional Drive which led to the proposed conditions

Councilmember Harris stated that he attended the December Planning Board meeting but was out of town for the meeting in January. He thanked Mr. Cogburn and his team as well as the

Planning Board and community stakeholders for all collaboratively working together to make this project as presented today.

Councilmember Blackwell stated they need Wawa in Edgecombe County as well. He stated in Edgecombe County they are looking for investors who have a vision of building just what is being discussed in an area that needs development, desires it and would support it. He explained that because they have limited offerings in their communities, the City does not have a chance to repay Edgecombe residents back what the residents invest in other places. He stated he does not hear any objections and he certainly does not have any but he is extending an open hand to the applicant, his company and investors to expand and extend beyond what is already being done. He explained that there is a whole market that is being underappreciated and they are missing money.

- Stated he appreciates that comment and he knows his client does as well because they are here tonight to show their commitment and he is sure they will take that to heart in looking at potential opportunities in the future

Councilmember Blackwell stated they would all work with him to work with the communities to welcome them and help them develop. He explained that that he does not think he is hearing people in Edgecombe County saying they do not want development. He continued stating that they are saying that neighborhoods where mostly black people live are overpopulated with certain types of businesses and do not give them an opportunity to grow their value.

- Stated his client is committed to being a good community citizen and again looking at opportunities where it can both do business to benefit obviously itself from an economic standpoint but also benefit the community

Councilmember Joyner thanked Mr. Cogburn for bringing this great opportunity here and the employment opportunity. He stated that a development like theirs would look beautiful out at the Kingsboro site and 64 crossing and suggested they ride by and take a look at it.

- Stated he is sure his client will as they are looking for as many opportunities as they can get and again they appreciate this dialogue and that is why they are here before the Council and they appreciate the input

### ***Richard Petway***

- Stated he appreciates everything that is being said and done but the citizens want a company to come in with living wages.
- Stated they need wages at least starting at \$15 on up an hour

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Harris and unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2024-7** entitled **ORDINANCE AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND MAP OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT** was adopted.

**CHAPTER 14 ENTITLED "MISCELLANEOUS OFFENSES/CODE AMENDMENT"**

The City Council was notified that at the January 22, 2024 council meeting they received an ordinance amending Chapter 14 of the City Code of Rocky Mount and this is the second reading for adoption.

Councilmember Blackwell asked for an explanation as far as the difference between what this is as opposed to what Council adopted earlier.

City Attorney Rose responded there are 3 changes which removed the enforcement by criminal means and they are 14-2 attaching signs to utility poles, 14-10 smoking in City vehicles and buildings, and 14-4 helmet and knee pads in City skateparks. He stated those are the only 3 changes in the Ordinance that was introduced at the last City Council meeting, and they came out of the comments at the meeting.

Councilmember Knight inquired if there will be signage posted regarding no weapons being allowed on City property as some of the buildings that the City currently leases are businesses and they may allow people to have concealed weapons.

City Attorney Rose responded if the building is leased then the tenant will control who comes in the building and what goes on in the building.

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner unanimously carried that **Ordinance No. O-2024-8** entitled **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** was adopted.

**APPOINTMENTS**

Mayor Roberson announced the resignation of Kelly Shore from the Housing Authority and he appointed Kevin Jones in that capacity.

No action was taken to fill the remaining vacancies on the City's Boards, Commissions and Committees.

**PUBLIC PETITIONS (CONT.)**

Mayor Roberson reopened the Public Petitions. The following individuals spoke:

***Ivana Hanson***

- Stated she is here tonight to say thank you for investing in downtown
- Stated she is a proud member of CCRP and she cannot sing Tanika Bryant's praises enough as she is an asset, a joy for this City, and she works really hard
- Stated they are doing a lot of work to grow the community downtown as there is a common misconception for people outside of the City that downtown is dead and people do not live/play there
- Stated she is here to say that is not true and people that do live downtown know that is a great place to live
- Thanked those who are investing in projects that are bringing more residents

- Thanked Councilmember Knight for suggesting a full-time grant writer as that would be a huge plus to the work they are trying to do downtown

### *Stephan Virgil*

- Stated he is here to talk about youth development through sports and mentoring
- Stated he was born and raised in Rocky Mount and left to play football and since he has been back he has been devoting his time to the youth in the community while trying to get back to the league
- Stated he mentors young men and women to prepare for that high level of performance that they look for
- Stated right now they are training at South Rocky Mount gym and Stith Talbert Park and the field behind South Rocky Mount is not being utilized and he would like to know if he can utilize it to have more room for more kids
- Stated he is proposing that they build up that area and any other area in the community such as where the fair used to be where the youth can be exposed to high level opportunities
- Stated he had a great time traveling across the world with his team and he really wants to bring that home to his community so they can do something positive with the youth and give them something to look forward to rather than being in the streets

### *Mumtaz Shaik*

- Thanked whoever chose to honor and recognize Ms. Loretta for her contributions to Rocky Mount
- Stated she attended Citizens Academy and can attest that Ms. Braswell is the consummate professional beneath whose gentle and quiet demeanor lies a wealth of knowledge and all thanks must go to Ms. Braswell for her invaluable service in the City
- Stated a video has surfaced on You Tube titled City of Rocky Mount Community Feedback
- Stated the questions were mundane, less than ideal and really questions anybody could have asked so there is no surprise that the feedback was vague and passive, feedback that she does not think applies to the objective of improving residents financial stability
- Asked what was the role or responsibility of the consultant that was selected for the City and how much was the consultant paid
- Stated she feels like this project would have been cheaper and more effectively handled by the City's own communications, marketing and public relations department and save our public money for livable wages for the City employees
- Stated small cities should reign in the use of consultants and empower our own City staff so the public does not have to pay the price for the lack of accountability, transparency and fiscal responsibility when a consultant is hired
- Asked if the consultant came up with recommendations that are of value to Rocky Mount and the citizens
- Stated she hopes to get a response to these questions and that it will be communicated to the public if and when the choice is made to implement some or all of the recommendations

### *Theresa Alston Stokes*

- Stated she is requesting an update to the public on funds that have been earmarked for affordable housing improvements whether through renovations or new construction
- Stated they have not seen much activity from the City staff to provide desperately needed decent, safe and affordable housing for families especially on the Edgecombe County side of Rocky Mount

- Stated they have seen study after study showing where the greatest needs are and the housing plan that was presented to Council under previous City Manager Small-Toney was updated last year but there has been no action to implement any recommendations from that plan
- Stated the City received and committed federal funding for housing in 2021 and preparation for a housing bond was started but they have not heard or seen any progress
- Stated as recent as last year, Representative Shelley Willingham secured and presented \$8.5 million dollars in state funding for the City with \$4.5 million dollars to be used for housing in Edgecombe County, even the state understood the need in Edgecombe County
- Asked that the City Council take the necessary steps to move affordable housing development to action as soon as possible and to address the housing throughout the City especially on the Edgecombe County side where the need is greatest
- Requested the City Council to host a town hall meeting with the citizens where they can hear Council's plans and share ideas for increasing affordable housing in the City and provide citizens with an update on the funds that have already been allocated as far as how they are being used
- Asked the Mayor if they could please leave the public petition time during the public petition time

#### *Nathlyn Ohree*

- Thanked the Mayor for the beautiful acknowledgement of Black History Month
- Stated she is concerned about preserving the internal integrity of the City staff
- Stated she is concerned about vital people being replaced with new people which causes a disruption in moving forward especially the Edgecombe side of Rocky Mount
- Asked for consideration to be given to those employees who are already on board who can be promoted to positions that have been vacated by key employees
- Stated she was riding down Fairview Road and there is a big hole in between the sidewalk and the ground right in front of D.S. Johnson school and a child could be harmed
- Stated she tried to call but she does not know if the right person got the message, but someone should be out there early in the morning to make sure no child is harmed

#### *Antoinette Cutler*

- Congratulated all for all the great things they are doing and have done for the City of Rocky Mount
- Stated she is here to let the City workers know that she stands behind them
- Stated at the last City Council meeting, she did not agree with the outburst and the disrespect of the City Manager and City Council as that is not the behavior that citizens should have or not the way they should treat or talk to each other
- Stated she does not agree that if they are just clapping in agreement and then they have to wait until the end of the meeting to speak

#### *Regina Townsend*

- Stated she is here because of the bulk trash and she has the environmental papers with her that have been revised
- Stated she calls all the time regarding George Street, certain areas of Happy Hill, Little Raleigh, the Neighborhood
- Stated people are going in and buying houses and they are taking all the trash out and putting it in the street and it is strolled everywhere and never picked up
- When she calls it in after 2 weeks she is told they cannot pick it up because no one lives there

- Ask if the property managers/owners know this before they put all the trash on the streets to make the neighborhoods look so bad
- Stated on Walnut Street, trash sat there for 3 weeks until community code got involved then it was cleared up in one day
- Stated there have been tires left at the old store on 590 Raleigh Blvd, trash is just being moved from one spot to another
- Stated she calls all the time and she is told if it is vacant it will not be picked up and she said something has to be done as people are tired of it

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Daughtridge, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned at 8:58 p.m.



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Kim Batts  
City Clerk