

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING

April 11, 2022 7:00 P.M.

REGULAR SESSION

PRESENT: The Honorable Gordon C. Helsel, Jr., Mayor
The Honorable Carey L. Freeman, Vice Mayor
The Honorable Herbert R. Green, Jr.
The Honorable David A. Hux
The Honorable Keith A. Feigh
The Honorable Jana D. Andrews

J. Randall Wheeler, City Manager
Kimberly Healy, City Clerk
D. Wayne Moore, City Attorney

ABSENT: None

VIA TELECOM: The Honorable Charles M. Southall III

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Mayor Helsel called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Councilwoman Andrews rendered the invocation and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AUDIENCE FOR VISITORS:

Faye Wimmer of 141 Emmaus Road, Dana Light of 102 Freemoor Drive, Lisa Rodriguez of 46 Dryden Drive, Libby Griebel of 46 Shoreline Drive, Bob Lippincott of 33 Carriage Hill Drive, Corrigan Threlkeld of 6 N. Westover Drive, Laurence Triggs of 41 Carriage Hill Drive all of Poquoson and Jim Welterth of 300 Chinquapin Orchard, Shawn Gorman of 312 Chinquapin Orchard, Jim O'Connell of 402 Chinquapin Orchard, Kathy Macklin of 325 Bunting Point Road all of Yorktown and Kimberly Hartsell of 598 Windjammer Crescent, Jenny Dail of 227 Dominion Drive both of Newport News spoke in favor of the Lambs Creek Dredging Project.

Robert Evans of 134 Freemoor Drive, Ted Causey of 100 Darden Drive, Steve Pappas of 137 Freemoor Drive spoke in opposition of the Lambs Creek Dredging Project.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

Councilman Green moved, seconded by Councilwoman Andrews, to adopt the minutes the Regular Session held March 28, 2022 as submitted. Recorded vote on the motion:

YES: Councilmembers Andrews, Southall, Feigh, Hux, Green, Vice Mayor Freeman and Mayor Helsel

NO: None

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Receipt of Bids for the Sale of Publicly Owned Property Located on Poquoson Avenue

City Manager, Randy Wheeler, reminded Council that at its meeting March 28, 2022 staff was authorized to advise the City’s intent to receive bids for the purchase of publicly owned property located at Poquoson Avenue identified as Tax Map Parcel # 20-1-36.

City Clerk, Kimberly Healy, opened the only bid and read it aloud stating that Extreme Builders extended an as is, all cash offer to bid on the property at 1013 Poquoson Avenue Tax Map Parcel # 20-1-36 in the amount of \$75,000.

Mayor Helsel opened the floor for Public Hearing. Having no one come forward the Public Hearing was closed.

Vice Mayor Freeman moved, seconded by Councilman Feigh, to postpone the vote on this matter until April 25, 2022. Recorded vote on the motion:

YES: Councilmembers Feigh, Andrews, Green, Southall, Hux, Vice Mayor Freeman and Mayor Helsel

NO: None

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Consideration of the Draft Letter to York County Pertaining to the Proposed Lambs Creek Dredging Project

Councilman Hux stated that he is grateful to live in a country where we can engage in civil discourse. He stated that there were a couple of comments that he needed to address in reference to City staff. He stated that someone said that the previous City Engineer was “incapable”, he continued that he is always impressed with the City staff and their professionalism. He also mentioned that someone stated that the Administration was a “bureaucracy” and he could not disagree more. He never underestimates the capabilities of the staff and there is no way to show enough gratitude and appreciation for what they do. They are a lean, efficient and highly professional staff and by no means a “bureaucracy”.

Councilman Hux moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Freeman, to not send the letter to York County but commit the City to further researching the ideas that were presented. Recorded vote on the motion:

YES: Councilmembers Green, Hux, Feigh, Southall, Andrews, Vice Mayor Freeman and Mayor Helsel

NO: None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023

City Manager, Randy Wheeler, presented the Fiscal Year 2023 City Manager Recommended Annual Financial Plan reminding the City Council that it has 45 days to take action. Mr. Wheeler started with the review of the current budget with where we are in terms of expenditures, anticipated challenges

and a review of our revenues. The City's overall financial position remains strong despite the on-going impacts of the public health emergency. It is expected that at the end of the year there will be a small, positive contribution to the General Fund Balance. Mr. Wheeler stated that along with the challenges of record inflation, high gas prices, Federal Reserve interest rate increases, a European war and the prospect of a double dip recession there has also been an increase in recruitment and retention of employees. With the City having such a small staff, when employees are lost it is a real challenge.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the FY2023 Recommended Budget does not contain any increases to the City tax rates. Due to the significant increases in the value of used vehicles this year City Council approved a change to the personal property tax calculation to lower the percentage of a vehicle's value from which the tax bill is calculated from 100% to 90% of value for tax year 2022. The Recommended budget fully funds the School Superintendent's Requested Budget which includes an additional amount equivalent to an additional 1% pay adjustment for School employees in addition to the 5% compensation increase requested as part of the School's budget. The Recommended Budget includes the allocation of almost two million dollars in federal funds to assist with the renovation of the HVAC system at the Poquoson Primary School. Public Safety recommendations include a new Public Safety Building to include the Police Department, Fire Administration and the Emergency Operations Center. The proposed Public Safety Building includes utilizing a mixture of discretionary federal funds and available debt capacity that would not require a tax rate increase, for a total project budget of approximately twelve million eight hundred thousand dollars. The budget also includes a special pay adjustment of one thousand dollars for all sworn public safety officers in recognition of significant recruitment and retention pressures being experienced by the City. This special pay adjustment is intended to be in addition to the general compensation increases recommended for all employees.

Mr. Wheeler reviewed the Quality of Life projects that are in the current year's budget to include the new park off of Kelsor Drive, restroom facilities at South Lawson Park, the Poquoson Avenue sidewalk project, maintenance and renovations to the Municipal Pool, two new micro parks on Wythe Creek Road and replacing the bleachers at Messick Point. Quality of Services recommendations do not include any new programs or significant enhancements in the General Fund but focuses on increasing employee compensation to help insure our ability to recruit and retain employees made necessary by the very high rate of inflation. Mr. Wheeler recommended a general wage increase of five percent plus fifteen hundred dollars for full-time permanent positions as well as a pay rate adjustment for part-time personnel. He also reviewed that the City's Fiscal Stability remains strong. The City remains in compliance with all of its adopted financial management policies and the reserve remains intact at the one million dollar level and the City has been able to maintain its AAA bond rating. During the past year the City has also provided funding to York/Poquoson Department of Social Services and the United Way to assist residents with COVID-related financial assistance and additional funds to the Economic Development Authority to provide assistance to local businesses.

Mr. Wheeler reviewed the following key dates: Joint work session with the School Board and budget public hearing on April 25, 2022 and final adoption of the budget on May 9, 2022.

Mayor Helsel expressed his appreciation for the staff keeping the City running and making Poquoson stand out amongst other communities. He also commended the staff and School Board for their response and handling of the COVID challenges that they faced and being leaders in getting staff vaccinated. Mayor Helsel expressed his hope that the citizens listen and understand the process of the work that goes on behind the scenes to try to make Poquoson a better city.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY MANAGER:

City Manager, Randy Wheeler, had no further comments.

COUNCIL DIRECTIVES:

Councilwoman Andrews thanked the Mayor for letting the citizens speak without a time limit during the Audience for Visitors. She also thanked the citizens who came out to speak and that the Council will look into their concerns and communicate with York County. She also urged the Council to follow through with researching the concerns that were expressed.

Vice Mayor Freeman agreed with Councilwoman Andrews in reference to not having a time limit for the citizens to speak.

Councilman Feigh agreed with what Councilwoman Andrews said and appreciates having the Work Session where the citizens can see Council talking about the issues and that Council is not completely blind and discuss the issues as good as they can so they can move forward from there.

Councilman Green stated that he did not appreciate comments made about the City staff during the Audience for Visitors and that he believes the City has one of the best staffs in the world.

Councilman Hux, in response to an earlier comment stated that he does not say things that he doesn't mean.

Councilman Southall seconded all of the positive comments previously made about the City Manager and staff. He also appreciates all of the citizens who participated in the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Councilman Green moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Freeman to adjourn the meeting. Recorded vote on the motion:

YES: Councilmembers Andrews, Feigh, Southall, Hux, Green, Vice Mayor Freeman and Mayor Helsel

NO: None

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:29 p.m.