



City of Hampton

22 Lincoln Street
Hampton, VA 23669
www.hampton.gov

Council Approved Minutes - Final City Council Work Session

Mayor Donnie R. Tuck
Vice Mayor Linda D. Curtis
Councilmember Jimmy Gray
Councilmember W.H. "Billy" Hobbs
Councilmember Will Moffett
Councilmember Teresa V. Schmidt
Councilmember Chris Snead

STAFF: Mary Bunting, City Manager
Vanessa T. Valldejuli, City Attorney
Katherine K. Glass, CMC, Clerk of Council

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

1:00 PM

Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Tuck called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Present 7 - Vice Mayor Linda D. Curtis, Councilmember Jimmy Gray, Councilmember Billy Hobbs, Councilmember Will Moffett, Councilmember Teresa V. Schmidt, Councilmember Chris Snead, and Mayor Donnie R. Tuck

DONNIE R. TUCK PRESIDED

AGENDA

1. [17-0135](#) Briefing on the proposal to establish a Regional Collision Reporting Center to handle accident reporting.

Attachments: [Presentation](#)

City Manager Mary Bunting introduced Hampton Police Division (HPD) Chief Terry Sult. She noted that there is no action requested today, and if Council would like staff to further pursue this item, they will bring it to Council for action at a later date.

Chief Sult noted that this model of accident reporting has been in existence for several decades in Canada. He stated that a Regional Collision Reporting Center would be a frugal cost-savings effort with Newport News, creating more man-hours on the street with the same resources. He noted that Roanoke City, Roanoke County, and Salem, Virginia are working on this program. He introduced Sergeant Jenifer Mento, HPD Records Unit, who presented this item.

During the presentation, Mayor Tuck asked what "PD Collisions" represented on

Slide 2. Sgt. Mento stated that this is the Police Department, or 911, which is what a citizen would call to initiate this process.

Sgt. Mento emphasized that this is a voluntary program and if, for any reason, a citizen did not wish to participate in the Collision Reporting Center process, officers will work the accident as they currently do.

Sgt. Mento stated that the driver of the vehicle must be present at the Collision Reporting Center, even if it is not the owner of the vehicle.

Sgt. Mento noted that this service is paid for exclusively by insurance companies, guaranteed by Accident Support Services International (ASSI). Insurance companies pay for each accident report they obtain or pay a certain amount monthly or annually for unlimited accident reports. They would no longer need to contact HPD to obtain these reports.

Sgt. Mento stated that HPD would benefit from saved man-hours, insurance companies benefit from fraud reduction and the cost is equivalent to what they currently pay HPD for accident reports, and the public gets to have a face-to-face, personalized experience to handle their accidents.

Vice Mayor Curtis asked Sgt. Mento to walk her through a hypothetical accident. Sgt. Mento stated that a citizen will call dispatch, who will send a police officer to the scene to assess the situation. Vice Mayor Curtis asked if an officer would come out to every accident anyway. Sgt. Mento confirmed this, but noted that the average time an officer spent at the scene would be reduced. It currently stands at approximately one hour and twenty-eight minutes on average. If the accident is minor and can be referred to the Collision Reporting Center, it will take an officer approximately fifteen to twenty minutes.

Vice Mayor Curtis asked what happens after a citizen arrives at the Collision Reporting Center. Sgt. Mento stated that a citizen would provide the documents filled out at the scene of the accident and be referred to a specialist at the Center. The specialist will work with the citizen to build an accident report, to include drawings and a statement. The citizen can also contact their insurance company at the Center. The specialist then conducts an evaluation of the vehicle, marking and photographing damage.

Vice Mayor Curtis asked if the other driver involved in the accident had to be present at the same time. Sgt. Mento stated that the other driver would respond at their convenience within 48 hours. Vice Mayor Curtis confirmed that the responding officer at the accident would have established that both drivers were consenting to

use the Collision Reporting Center. She asked how much time is saved by using this process. Sgt. Mento stated that it is the same amount of time for a citizen, but it saves an officer approximately one hour.

Councilwoman Schmidt asked if the statistics provided were based on the assumption that everyone would want to use the Collision Reporting Center. Sgt. Mento stated that it is based on an analysis of the accidents currently coming into the records unit, an expanded view based on the statistics from February 2017. There were 191 non-injury, non-alcohol related accidents that would have been referable. Councilwoman Schmidt requested and received confirmation that a citizen did not have to use the service.

Councilwoman Schmidt asked how it has worked in Roanoke. Sgt. Mento stated that Roanoke has been pleased with their experience and has received a positive response from the public. Once the public was educated on the use, citizens were more eager to use the Collision Reporting Center instead of the police department. She stated that she believes there is a level of comfort in having another citizen handle the accident instead of an officer.

Councilwoman Schmidt asked why this was not a service that could be provided by the shops in Hampton that provide collision repair services. Sgt. Mento stated that the Collision Reporting Center has no financial benefit from making an assessment of damage to the vehicle. They do not refer cars to a body shop; that is completely up to the citizen or insurance company. The Collision Repair Center is an independent third-party with no financial interest in the outcome of the accident.

Councilwoman Schmidt asked what service the Collision Reporting Center provided that regular body shops do not. Sgt. Mento stated that body shops do not necessarily provide an estimate. They can make a recommendation, but most insurance companies have an adjuster that evaluates that estimate. The Collision Reporting Center has a contract with the insurance companies that confirms their independent, third-party status and that they are trained to make fair assessments. Citizens will not be taken advantage of, as there is no financial gain to be had. They also create an accident report, which is currently a function of HPD.

Chief Sult noted that accidents referred to the Collision Reporting Center are for drivable vehicles. Without the Collision Reporting Center, a citizen would have to meet with an insurance adjuster and with a shop. With the Collision Reporting Center, an insurance adjuster is already employed by the Center, eliminating one step for citizens.

Chief Sult stated that Roanoke City had approximately 300 accidents reported to the

Collision Reporting Center between October and December 2016 out of 600 eligible accidents. The number of citizens reporting to the Collision Reporting Center is increasing as citizens become more comfortable. Roanoke County was experiencing issues such as price gouging, kickbacks, and upsells that were not happening in Roanoke City because the city has more towing regulations than the county. The Collision Reporting Center helps to resolve that issue.

Mayor Tuck asked where the Center would be located. Chief Sult stated that if the Collision Reporting Center is just servicing the City, it will be centrally located in Hampton. If the City partners with Newport News, there will be two, one in Denbigh and one on West Mercury.

Mayor Tuck asked what would happen if additional damage occurs as a result of the original accident while driving to the Collision Reporting Center, such as a bumper falling off and being lost. Chief Sult indicated that this type of thing occurs already, and insurance adjusters are used to dealing with it.

Mayor Tuck asked for clarification on the numbers used for time saved. Chief Sult noted that HPD officers do not work 40-hour weeks but the average annual hours worked per year are 2,080. Mayor Tuck stated that this would mean it would have to be over 4,000 hours to result in 2.12 officers. When he did the math, the result was closer to 1,600 hours. Sgt. Mento stated that 1,600 hours is correct, because that is the statistical number of hours a police officer works, after taking into account things such as vacations, training, and sick leave.

Ms. Bunting asked if Council was comfortable moving forward. There was general agreement from Council.

Councilman Gray asked if Council gets final approval. Ms. Bunting stated that there was no legal requirement for Council to approve it, but staff would want Council to review the details ahead of time. Chief Sult stated thus far HPD does not have confirmation that Newport News would want to make it a joint effort, which can change the dynamics. There is also additional information from Roanoke that staff can provide. He noted that there is a data connection issue with the report management system provider, and costs can be reduced in that area. There are still some unknowns that staff would like to bring back to Council.

Councilman Gray asked if it was a private entity that would be setting up and running the Collision Reporting Center. Chief Sult confirmed this. Councilman Gray requested a representative from that company also be present at any follow-up presentation.

Councilman Moffett asked if there would be a pilot program, because there could be an indication that it is not a good fit for the City. Sgt. Mento stated that there would be a pilot program for one year. After the first year, both the City and the service provider would assess if it was a good fit. Chief Sult stated that it has to be feasible for both the City and the provider to continue the program.

Councilman Moffett asked how citizens would be educated on the benefits to encourage participation. Sgt. Mento stated that this would be a job for the HPD Public Information Office. It would need to be done one person at a time, through social media and through responding officers. Chief Sult stated that there would need to be a marketing strategy, and Hampton will be able to learn from other localities that have already implemented this program. Citizens have to feel comfortable with the process for it to be successful.

City Attorney Vanessa Valldejuli stated that if this is a joint effort with Newport News, Council would have to approve a Resolution to authorize the partnership. If there is no partnership, a briefing with additional details would be all that was necessary.

In response to Councilman Moffett's concerns about encouraging citizens to call the Collision Reporting Center, Councilman Gray stated that he believes citizens would start the process the same way, by calling 911 after an accident. Sgt. Mento confirmed this and stated that the responding officer would explain the new process to citizens if it is applicable.

Ms. Bunting noted that there are sometimes minor accidents in a private parking lot, where HPD is not able to do anything. She asked if citizens would be able to self-refer to the Collision Reporting Center. Chief Sult stated that they can go to the center, but HPD would not take a report under those circumstances. Ms. Bunting stated that this could provide an extra level of comfort for citizens.

Councilwoman Snead asked how the Collision Reporting Center makes its money. Chief Sult stated that funding is provided by insurance companies, who benefit from a reduction in their cost of adjusters and picking up accident reports because it becomes an automated system for them.

Councilwoman Snead asked if an insurance company can force a citizen to go to the Collision Reporting Center, if the citizen chose not to call the police because the accident was minor. Chief Sult stated that an insurance company might ask the citizen to go to the Center for the insurance adjustment, but they cannot mandate it.

Councilman Hobbs noted that in the car business, they have people who are in minor accidents and never report it, paying for repairs out of pocket. Car dealers do

not have any indication that the vehicle was in an accident, and possibly not repaired properly, until after they have purchased it. They are in favor of reporting, and the Collision Reporting Center might be another answer to that.

Presented by Chief Sult. Chief Sult then called upon Sgt. Jennifer Mento of the HPD Records Unit.

2. [17-0142](#) City Manager's Fiscal Year 2018 Recommended Budget Highlights

Attachments: [Presentation](#)

Ms. Bunting noted that the City Code requires that a budget document be delivered to Council on April 15th. It will be delivered to Council and the libraries this Friday or Saturday. She provided a brief overview as follows:

The budget totals \$467,844,000, a 1.0% increase from the FY 2017 budget. Of this amount, the City's operating portion is \$186,324,480, or 39.8%; the school's operating portion is \$203,660,107, or 43.5%; and other items (debt/capital for City and schools, regional entities, etc.) total \$77,859,413, or 16.7%.

Although real estate property values increased for the third straight year, the City's economic recovery remains slow. The Hampton Roads region's recovery from the recession is ranked one of the nation's slowest, according to the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC). However, this Recommended Budget provides for employee raises, investments in public safety and education, and other initiatives that support the strategic priorities identified by City Council without an increase in the real estate tax or any budget related layoffs of permanent full-time staff.

Other budget highlights include the funding of seven new officers to supplement five Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant-funded positions added midyear to expand police presence on the street, the continuation and expansion of youth violence efforts, expansion of Coastal Resiliency efforts, and a continued focus on the "Love Your City" grant program to promote and highlight the unique events that promote fun in the community.

The budget does not include increases in general real estate or personal property tax rates. However, as discussed in the community budget conversations, there is a need for a solid waste user fee increase of twenty-two cents per week, or \$11.44 total for the year. This increase is smaller than the one projected two years ago. The stormwater user fee increase that was projected for this year was not needed, and thus there is no proposed rate change to that or the wastewater fee.

Also as discussed in community budget conversations, staff found that all of the other localities in the region had a recreational vehicle (RV) tax in place, with rates ranging from a low of \$1.00 per \$100 of assessed value in Newport News to \$4.00 in York and James City Counties. Most communities had a \$1.50 rate; thus, this is the proposed rate in the budget. During community polling, more than 85% of residents agreed with reinstating a personal property tax on RVs.

Two policy changes are being put forward to stabilize revenue sources for the future, one relating to EMS fees and the other relating to extended stay hotel lodging taxes. Under the current insurance billing program, co-pays for EMS fees were waived for residents. Recent developments, principally a market shift to high deductible plans, threaten the stability of this revenue source which supports the operating budget of the Hampton Fire & Rescue Department. Other cities charge residents co-pays, including Newport News with whom the City is working on automatic mutual aid dispatching for routine calls. Residents overwhelmingly supported charging co-pays both to protect the automatic mutual dispatching program with Newport News and to stabilize the EMS revenue source. While rates will not change as a result of this policy change, residents will become responsible for co-pays not covered by insurance.

In relation to extended-stay hotel lodging taxes, current City Code limits the collection of lodging tax to those in extended stay properties for stays of 60 days or less. State Code permits up to 90 days, and other cities throughout the Commonwealth, such as Virginia Beach, take advantage of this full 90 days. Changing the City policy to 90-day stays will result in an additional \$75,000 of revenue for the community from out-of-town guests.

With a shift in Federal government priorities stemming from the new Presidential administration, the City and region could be impacted in potentially positive or negative ways. The budget has been prepared as though traditional funding will continue, but staff will be prepared to make adjustments during the year as necessary.

Several economic development projects are on the verge of fruition. The City continues to see development momentum with new investments, including ongoing projects such as the expansion of the Peninsula Town Center; the redevelopment of Riverdale into Riverpointe anchored by Kroger and At Home; Lidl; Aldi; aggressive development at the H2O; the Armory reuse; new Hyatt Place Hotel; and other investments such as the Peninsula Town Center's recently announced Macy's redevelopment plans. The value of construction permits more than doubled from FY14 to FY16. Staff is optimistic that these trends will continue, as they continue to seek development proposals for City-owned properties and work with private

landowners, particularly in Master Plan areas, to seek expansions and redevelopment.

Ms. Bunting thanked the department heads, Assistant City Managers, and the budget team for meeting the challenges posed by this year's budget. She also thanked residents for their continued participation and input into the budget development process.

Mayor Tuck asked if discussions regarding the Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) restructuring had occurred between the cities that support it. Ms. Bunting stated that there is a willingness to consider the changes requested by HRT, but no final decisions have been made. Each city is sending their top finance and budget employees to work together on several challenges presented by HRT. This group will be meeting over the coming weeks, and the City has assigned Mr. Brian DeProfio, Budget and Strategic Initiatives Director, and Mr. Karl Daughtrey, Finance Director, to that group. If decisions are made, they would not be part of the budget adoption, but a resolution with amendments agreed to by all cities.

Presented by Mary Bunting, City Manager.

REGIONAL ISSUES

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Tuck stated that he was pleased to see Bruce Sturk, Hampton's Director of Federal Facilities, on Heresay today speaking on Hampton's Adopted Airman program.

CLOSED SESSION

3. [17-0129](#) Closed session pursuant to Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3711.A.1, .3, and .7 to discuss appointments to the Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads; to discuss or consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or the disposition of publicly held real property in the Downtown Hampton and Langley Corridor areas where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the City; and to consult with legal counsel employed or retained by the City regarding actual or probable litigation, and specific legal matters pertaining to land use applications, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and a coastal primary sand dune and beaches ordinance requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

At 2:16 p.m., a motion was made by Vice Mayor Curtis and seconded by Councilmember Gray that this Closed Session - Motion be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Vice Mayor Curtis, Councilmember Gray, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Moffett, Councilmember Schmidt, Councilmember Snead and Mayor Tuck

- 4. [17-0128](#) Consideration of appointments to Transportation District Commission of Hampton Roads

CERTIFICATION

- 5. [17-0106](#) Resolution Certifying Closed Session

At 5:24 p.m., a motion was made by Councilmember Moffett and seconded by Vice Mayor Curtis, that this Closed Session - Certification be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Vice Mayor Curtis, Councilmember Gray, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Moffett, Councilmember Schmidt, Councilmember Snead and Mayor Tuck

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

Donnie R. Tuck
Mayor

Katherine K. Glass, CMC
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council _____