



City of Hampton

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

Council Approved Minutes - Final City Council Legislative Session

Mayor Donnie R. Tuck
Vice Mayor Jimmy Gray
Councilmember Chris L. Bowman
Councilmember Eleanor Weston Brown
Councilmember Steven L. Brown
Councilmember Billy Hobbs
Councilmember Chris Snead

STAFF: Mary Bunting, City Manager
Cheran Cordell Ivery, City Attorney
Katherine K. Glass, Clerk of Council

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Tuck called the meeting to order at 6:54 p.m. Those physically present in Council Chambers were Councilman Bowman, Councilwoman Brown, Councilman Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, and Mayor Tuck. Those participating remotely via Zoom were Councilman Hobbs (pursuant to Section (1)(a) of the City Council's Electronic Meeting policy), and Councilwoman Snead (pursuant to Section (1)(a) of the City Council's Electronic Meeting policy).

Also physically present in Council Chambers were Katherine Glass, Clerk of Council, Steve Fryer, Channel 47, a staff member from the Information Technologies Department of the City, and a Bailiff from the Sheriff's Department. Lisa Vernon Sparks, of the Daily Press, and a citizen were also present. The City Manager, Mary Bunting, and the City Attorney, Cheran Ivery, participated from within City Hall via Zoom.

Present: 7 - Councilmember Chris L. Bowman, Councilmember Eleanor Weston Brown, Councilmember Steven L. Brown, Vice Mayor Jimmy Gray, Councilmember Billy Hobbs, Councilmember Chris Snead and Mayor Donnie R. Tuck

DONNIE R. TUCK PRESIDED

[21-0063](#)

Motion to approve the electronic participation of Councilman

Hobbs (pursuant to Section (1)(a) of the City Council's Electronic Meeting policy), and Councilwoman Snead (pursuant to Section (1)(a) of the City Council's Electronic Meeting policy).

Councilmembers Billy Hobbs and Chris Snead read statements requesting approval to participate in the meeting via zoom.

For the benefit of the public, Mayor Tuck announced that Council has a governmental exception to the Governor's Executive Order which limits public gatherings to no more than 10 individuals but City Council is setting an example by adhering to this guidance so two members of City Council will participate in the meeting remotely.

A motion was made by Councilmember Steven Brown and seconded by Councilmember Chris Bowman, that this Motion be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 5 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Weston Brown, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray and Mayor Tuck

Abstained: 2 - Councilmember Hobbs and Councilmember Snead

INVOCATION - Councilman Chris Bowman

Councilman Bowman gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG

To avoid feedback, Mayor Tuck led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor Tuck took a moment to explain and share information on the COVID vaccination process. He also read an excerpt of a letter from Gov. Northam and provided the following contact information for citizens' use:

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/peninsula/>

Peninsula Health District Phone Number: 757-594-7300
Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM

COVID-19 Call Center: 757-594-7069
Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM

COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center: 757-594-7496
Monday-Friday 9AM-4PM

The City Manager, Mary Bunting, provided additional information concerning the vaccination process.

CONSENT AGENDA

Clerk of Council Katherine Glass read the protocol for the consent agenda and a summary of the consent items.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion made by Councilmember Snead, seconded by Councilmember Brown, to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Weston Brown, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Snead and Mayor Tuck

1. [21-0044](#) Resolution to Amend the Fiscal Year 2021 Council Approved Budget to Accept and Appropriate the Rescue Squad Assistance Fund Grant Awarded by the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services

Attachments: [Award letter 01012021](#)
[RSAF Info Sheet](#)

Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Weston Brown, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Snead and Mayor Tuck

2. [21-0045](#) Resolution Approving the Fiscal Year 2021 First Quarter Budget Adjustments

Attachments: [FY21 First Qtr Budget Adjustments ACTION](#)

Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Weston Brown, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Snead and Mayor Tuck

3. [21-0055](#) Approval of the minutes from the legislative session of January 13, 2021.

Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Weston Brown, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Snead and Mayor Tuck

PRESENTATIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, AWARDS

4. [21-0037](#) Budget Briefings - City Real Estate Assessments

Attachments: [Presentation](#)

Mayor Tuck asked City Manager Mary Bunting to introduce the agenda item.

The City Manager, Mary Bunting, introduced the next agenda item prepared by the City's assessment team. Ms. Libby Griebel, the Interim Assessor, will present an updated on the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 real estate assessments. Ms. Bunting said that Ms. Griebel will explain how the land book is readied and shared that the state of Virginia requires that assessments be based upon sale market data and the City must follow the data. Ms. Griebel will explain what the data meant this year and why the land book looks like it does. There is both good news in the values of residential real estate have risen nicely due to strong sales and bad news that some commercial properties are declining due to the effects of the pandemic since they rely on an income-based approach. Ms. Griebel will also talk about the process and how the appeals process works. Real estate taxes form the basis of Hampton's largest income source as the staff prepared the FY 2022 proposed budget.

Mrs. Griebel greeted the Councilmembers and presented the Preliminary Land Book FY2022 slideshow produced by the Office of the Assessor of Real Estate on January 27, 2021.

Mrs. Griebel described the first slide as a map of the City of 2020 transfers of qualifying and non-qualifying sales such as foreclosures, bank sales and related parties. She explained that all dots may not be sales, but may be zero transfers as well. She reported 4,669 as the total number of transfers for 2020. There were 1309 zero transfers, 2197 qualifying arm length sales defined by State Department of Taxation which includes remodels, flips, and new construction. She reported 119

foreclosures, 1,044 other non-qualifying sales, and \$235,000 median sale price which is an increase from last year.

Mrs. Griebel reviewed a graph of the foreclosures showing a 67% decrease. The qualifying sales are sales used to look at properties across the City. Qualifying sales are considered arm length transactions by the Department of Taxation. She reported a 13% increase in qualifying sales this year for a total of 2,197.

Mrs. Griebel continued to the next slide describing the increase in the median residential sales price. She reported it increased to \$235,000 in 2020 which is a 7% increase over 2019.

She proceeded to the next slide stating the Office of the Assessor of Real Estate will mail out approximately 44,738 notice changes. Out of that amount, 97% will be increases in assessment values and 3% will be a decrease in assessment values.

Mrs. Griebel reviewed the next slide of the presentation which showed a pie chart of the total market value at \$15,838,191,900.

She shared the next slide displaying the residential change for fiscal year 2021 and 2022 and reported a value increase at 6.5% including new construction. Mrs. Griebel reviewed the next few slides of the presentation which provided information about the northwest, northeast, southeast, and southwest quadrants.

Mrs. Griebel explained northeast as the Grandview and Fox Hill areas, southeast is down to Phoebus and downtown Hampton, and southwest is towards the Newport News line.

On the next slide, she reported a multi-family change of 11% which includes new construction.

She continued the slideshow presentation discussing commercial change decrease due primarily to hotels, theatres, and some commercial properties unable to sustain the pandemic. Exempt changes were off approximately 3%.

Mrs. Griebel showed a chart illustrating the assessed value since fiscal year 2002. At 2022 the assessed value reached \$15 billion, considerably above 2020.

On the land use deferral change slide, she reported a zero change and slight increase in assessment value of parcels.

Rehabilitation tax credit reported 10 parcels in FY2021 and FY2022 which totaled a

slight increase of 2% of \$163,300.

On the next slide, Mrs. Griebel announce the City is trending upwards from FY2021 4.6% taxable increase to FY2022 5.7% taxable increase.

She highlighted pending and future residential developments that are in process right now with completion dates in 2021: Beach Walk condos in Buckroe, Compass 19 condos in Power Plant, Manilla Townhomes in Fox Hill, and Mallory Point Single Family homes in Phoebus. Mrs. Griebel mentioned the considerable amount of new construction taking place at in-fill lots which are vacant lots throughout the City where older or dilapidated homes were removed and replaced by new construction.

On the next slide, Mrs. Griebel shared the pending/future development of multi-family homes: Aero Apartments, Ellipse, Lumen Apartments, Monroe Gates, and the Goodyear site. The new Goodyear site is anticipated to have approximately 160 units.

She proceeded explaining pending/future developments for commercial sites including a strip mall near Target, Tropical Smoothie, Metro Diner, Rack Room Shoes, Langley Federal Credit Union on Nickerson, and Burger King on N. Armistead & LaSalle. Other developments include Magruder Landing Bus Ctr, Seafood Research Center, Amazon (the old Kmart), Old Sears Building, and Chick-fil-a.

Mrs. Greibel reviewed local statistics, comparing 2020 to 2019. She reported over a twelve-month period the sales price has increased and the days on market have decreased. Next, she reviewed the quarterly sold sales for the local statistics. According to realtors, due to limited inventory, the sale prices are being bid up and the realtors are receiving multiple offers on the parcels.

Over the next few slides, Mrs. Greibel reported a steady trend from the beginning of January 2020 to the current time. The statistics show a steady trend in increased sales prices and a decrease in the days on market. The median is running at 100% consistently as of now. As of January 1, 2021, to today, the close listings statistics report a continuing trend for 2020.

She concluded the presentation with a review of the summary slide.

Mrs. Greibel informed the Council that their department still carries the Certificate of Excellence in Assessment Administration through the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) which is the organization they work under.

She opened the floor for questions and further explained that notices will be mailed on February 12th. The appeal periods will run from February 12th to March 15th with the office appeal and through April 15th will be the Board of Review appeal. Citizens are encouraged to contact their office with any questions, and they will connect them with the appraiser for their neighborhood. There is a calendar setup for citizens to come in and sit down with their appraiser while practicing social distancing.

City Manager, Mrs. Bunting asked the Council if there were further questions. She reminded everyone that the City is audited by the State to make sure the City is adhering to fair market value principles in our assessments. There's a sales study that reviews how well the City is doing. It is expected that localities get as close to 100% as possible. If the City falls too far below or too far above, the State reserves the right to take over our assessment practices. She reported that the numbers are not made up and that the well-trained assessors follow best practices. Hampton is one of the few localities in Virginia that follow the IAAO and is seen as a place where people are willing to invest in residential single-family homes.

Mrs. Bunting opened the floor for questions.

Mayor Tuck asked the Council if there were any questions.

The Mayor stated he had an observation. He shared an email he received in reference to affordable housing in Hampton. He asked if there were strategies that could be employed such as allowing a developer to build a certain amount of houses at market value in exchange for houses below market value.

Mrs. Bunting responded stating that the City will continue to update citizens on affordable housing. She explained that the strategy mentioned by the Mayor is currently in use by Hampton. There are a few apartment units developed where a certain number are held back for individuals with lower income thresholds. Whereas most of the units may be advertised above market value. Mrs. Bunting reported there is a team looking at affordability that can create a proposal. She stated there are a lot of small homes in Hampton considered post-war housing that are outdated and need repair. The strategy being considered is how to upgrade those homes versus building more tiny homes. Will bring back specific reactions to proposals forwarded to the Mayor.

Mayor Tuck asked if there were any questions or comments from Council.

He thanked Mrs. Greibel for the presentation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings scheduled.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Tuck asked the Clerk to read the protocol for the public comment.

Ms. Glass read the protocol for the public comment.

Mayor Tuck announced there was one person to speak: Alden Abernethy

Mayor Tuck welcomed Mr. Abernethy.

Mr. Abernethy responded:

Good evening. Thank you for allowing this time to speak with you. I promise I will keep it as short as possible for all of our sakes. I am actually on my lunch break at present. My name is Alden Abernethy and I am employed by the City as a 911 dispatch supervisor. 911 dispatcher is actually what I am here to speak about this evening. Out of curiosity are any of you aware of the status of the 911 setup right now?

Mayor Tuck asked Mr. Abernethy to continue.

Mr. Abernethy continued:

Okay cool, that works. The center takes 911 calls as well as non-emergency and after hours 311 calls. Calls coming in on the daily, around this time of year, equal out to 600 to 700 calls a day. Our employees also operate three primary radio channels for police, fire, EMS, and animal control as well as a multitude of secondary channels. We also provide general customer service and answer general questions. It is a 24-7, 365 operation. There is without exaggeration never a single moment that there are no people in that office working those computers. We come in during any weather condition. We have not been able to work remotely during the pandemic and if the building catches fire we will still be up there until our secondary relocation center is setup.

We work in 12-hour rotation and to staff those shifts is the issue. We are severely understaffed. Personnel are working literally weeks without a break. I personally am on day 12. After this meeting is over, I will finish my shift and fingers crossed I will have a couple of days off before another 10 day stretch.

See, when we plan our schedules, we have our regularly scheduled shift days of 15 a month then we have on call days that are seven or eight days. Due to overtime to

cover shifts due to the poor staffing, we must sign up for a mandatory minimum number of overtime hours, this month being 48 additional hours. That breaks down to four additional days meaning that we are working 26 or 27 days on duty with only three or four days off, assuming that we are not trying to help other people with vacation requests. I know that time is ticking. In short, we are horribly overworked and understaffed. I'm coming to you with this because while I'm confident that my chain of command is working on this, I wanted to make sure that you are aware. It has been five years since it became a critical issue and it's only gotten worse than you can imagine. I want to be clear that I am not here for better pay or benefits. I am not here to publicly denounce the City or the department that employs me. I'm here to inform you, if you are not already informed. In addition, I want to say this cannot continue. The last five years around 46 employees ranging from trainees and incredibly skilled dispatchers left because of inhumane circumstances. I haven't seen my family and friends in months before COVID...

Timer went off

Mr. Abernethy asks for 30 more seconds.

Mayor Tuck grants Mr. Abernethy more time.

Mr. Abernethy continues: ...even before COVID. My relationship is suffering because I am never at home. My kids want to run away from me because they think I'm a stranger. My friends don't bother to reach out to me anymore because they know I'll be working. I can't watch shows or play games, not only because I don't have time, but because I hear screaming so much at work that when I'm at home in a safe space I can't resist the adrenaline kick. There are some days I get four or less hours of sleep because I have to trade rest to take care of responsibilities. Sleep is not even rest anymore; it is a task I complete to make sure I can do my job the next day. I cannot tell you how many times I have to take five-hour energies or drink energy drinks so I can make sure I'm not putting citizens at risk due to our fatigue. It's not just me, but everyone in the office. We don't want empty rhetoric, it's a distraction from the issue...

Mayor stated his appreciation for the presentation and informed Mr. Abernethy that the City Manager can address a situation if it's been brought to her attention and she will do her best to resolve the issue. He thanked Mr. Abernethy for coming before the Council and if there were additional comments to give them to the Clerk and she will make sure they receive them.

City Manager Mary Bunting stated that the situation is being worked on and that she is aware of the situation and working with HR, Police chief, Fire chief. A variety of

things are being done including reaching out with the Hampton City Schools on dispatcher academy so students can graduate into the 911 dispatching center. She continued that 911 is a critical job and all the cities in the area are having trouble manning a limited supply of people.

Mrs. Bunting confirmed that the 911 dispatchers are amazing people. They are a critical part of the public safety system. It is a noble profession and the City cares deeply for them and want to get more dispatchers. She has asked for people to apply to be a dispatcher. The issues described relate to not having the supply of people to work the jobs. The City will gladly fill every position. She publicly thanked the 911 dispatchers and described them as phenomenal people.

Mayor Tuck thanked Mrs. Bunting and concluded the Public Comment period.

GENERAL ITEMS

There were no general items.

REPORTS BY CITY MANAGER, CITY COUNCIL, STAFF, COMMITTEES

There were no reports.

MISCELLANEOUS NEW BUSINESS

There were no items of new business.

ADJOURNMENT

Prior to adjourning, Mayor Tuck shared that Gov. Northam today announced that the restrictions on the number of individuals who may gather will continue at least through the end of February.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Donnie R. Tuck
Mayor

Katherine K. Glass, CMC
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council _____