



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 Steven L. Brown
Councilmember Hope L. Harper
Councilmember Billy Hobbs
Councilmember Martha Mugler

STAFF: Mary Bunting, City Manager
Steven D. Bond, Interim City Attorney
Katherine K. Glass, CMC, Clerk of Council

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

First Public Hearing on FY24 Manager's Recommended Budget

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Tuck called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. All members of the City Council were present.

Present: 7 - Councilmember Chris L. Bowman, Councilmember Steven L. Brown, Vice Mayor Jimmy Gray, Councilmember Hope L. Harper, Councilmember Billy Hobbs, Councilmember Martha Mugler and Mayor Donnie R. Tuck

DONNIE R. TUCK PRESIDED

INVOCATION - Councilman Billy Hobbs

Councilman Hobbs gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor Tuck gave brief remarks concerning Administrative Professionals Week.

The Mayor also shared that Katherine Glass, Clerk of Council, was recently elected Vice President of the Virginia Municipal Clerks Association and Jennifer Green was elected Treasurer.

He then read and presented a proclamation recognizing April 30

- May 6, 2023, as Municipal Clerks Week in the City of Hampton, Virginia. Mayor Tuck presented the proclamation to Katherine Glass, Clerk of Council; Cristine Gray, Deputy Clerk; Joy Mautz, Deputy Clerk; and Jenn Green, Assistant to the City Manager. Mayor Tuck also recognized Tammy Lee, Deputy Clerk, who was not present at the meeting.

[23-0122](#)

Motion to Amend the Agenda to add the Consideration of an Appointment to the Planning Commission

A motion was made by Councilmember Billy Hobbs and seconded by Councilmember Chris Bowman, that the agenda be amended to add the consideration of an appointment to the Planning Commission. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the Consent Agenda

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

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

1. [23-0099](#)

Resolution to Amend the Fiscal Year 2023 Council Approved Budget to Appropriate \$250, 000 from the General Fund's Restricted Fund Balance to the Sheriff-Jail's General Fund Operating Budget.

Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

2. [23-0104](#)

Resolution to Amend the Cost Allocation Agreement Between the Cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk,

Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, and the Transportation District
Commission of Hampton Roads
Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

3. [23-0109](#) Resolution to Amend the Fiscal Year 2023 Council Approved Budget to Accept and Appropriate the Fiscal Year 2023 Cigarette Litter Prevention Program Grant Awarded by Keep America Beautiful

Attachments: [Grant Agreement](#)

Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

4. [23-0115](#) Approval of the minutes from the City Council Legislative Session of March 8, 2023.
Item approved.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

PRESENTATIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, AWARDS

PUBLIC HEARINGS

5. [23-0066](#) Public Hearing and Vote on the Fiscal Year 2024 - 2028 Capital Improvement Plan ("CIP")

Attachments: [Presentation](#)

City Manager Mary Bunting introduced Management Analyst Ms. Rebecca Spurrier to make the presentation.

Ms. Spurrier explained that the CIP is a multi-year funding schedule for the acquisition of property and equipment; new construction; and maintenance or other major improvements of City capital assets that have a minimum cost of \$50,000

and/or a life expectancy of at least five years. Examples include heavy equipment, vehicles, or buildings. Capital projects can be paid for in several different ways including bonds or municipal loans, the general fund balance, dedicated sources such as revenues from taxes and fees, and state or federal one-time funding for specific projects. The fiscal year (FY) 2024 through FY 2028 CIP is focused on strategic priorities identified by Council including economic growth, educated citizenry, excellence in government, living with water, placemaking, family resilience and economic empowerment, and safe and clean community.

Ms. Spurrier shared data on the funding allocation for each strategic priority showing that the largest percentages go to excellence in government and educated citizenry. She provided a breakdown of how the money will be spent over five years for projects included in each of the strategic priorities.

Economic growth accounts for 4% or just over \$13 million of the CIP. The projects that fall under this category include some that occur every year, like the Model Block Housing Program and the Housing Redevelopment Fund.

Educated citizenry accounts for 23% of the CIP, or \$77.8 million, which includes a \$20 million literary loan taken out in advance to be used for the expansion of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) wing at Bethel High School.

Excellence in government accounts for 36% of the CIP, or \$120 million, which includes projects such as City-wide street and traffic maintenance, maintenance of public properties, and other things that contribute to excellence in government.

The one percent or \$2.5 million allocated to family resilience and economic empowerment is going towards the Riverside Psychiatric Emergency Department. Ms. Spurrier noted that the reason this only accounts for one percent is because a lot of the contributions to this category come from the general operating fund or other revenues.

Living with water accounts for 18%, or \$60.9 million of the CIP. Many of the projects in this category are incorporated to meet mandates around stormwater and wastewater improvements.

Placemaking accounts for nine percent, or \$28.7 million of the CIP. This category contains many regular projects like City-wide and downtown landscaping, and the neighborhood improvement fund. This is the first year that funding is being allocated toward the public art program.

Safe and clean accounts for nine percent, or \$28.2 million of the CIP. A lot of the projects are yearly allocations such as public safety equipment, and the blighted property acquisition and demolition. Ms. Spurrier noted that, out of this funding, there is \$1 million allocated in FY26 for the Phoebus Fire Station design, and in FY28 there is \$16.8 million planned for its construction.

Mayor Tuck opened the public hearing. He welcomed Mr. Mark Duncan who was the only person signed up to speak.

Mr. Duncan greeted Council and made the following statement: I am with Riverside Health System. I'm also a Hampton City resident. We at Riverside are grateful for the City Manager's recommended support in the capital improvement plan for the new psychiatric emergency department at Riverside Behavioral Health Center located on Executive Drive. We very much appreciate Council's consideration of this request. We're excited about this project. This will be the first dedicated psychiatric emergency department in Virginia. This nearly 20,000 square foot expansion of the current hospital is part of a nearly \$30 million capital investment Riverside has made at Riverside Behavioral Health Center over the last few years to restructure beds, add a range of new outpatient services, and provide the most appropriate care setting to treat people experiencing a psychiatric emergency. Just earlier this week, I was with members of our Emergency Department team at Riverside Regional Medical Center. This included nurses from our trauma center, forensic nurses, and our hospital-based violence intervention program. They all volunteer that we have too many behavioral health patients in our acute care hospital emergency departments. That's simply not the best care setting to treat people experiencing a psychiatric emergency. And for those who know a little bit about how healthcare providers are reimbursed for treating behavioral health patients, and I know several of you have experience in this space, you understand that reimbursements do not cover the cost of care. At Riverside, we also treat people regardless of their ability to pay. The investments Riverside has made and is continuing to make in behavioral health are mission-driven, not margin-driven, decisions. Regardless, they are essential and something Riverside is strongly committed to because we realize the expansion of services and facilities addresses an important community need. Support from partners like the City of Hampton will ensure this project is successful and sustainable over the long term. And just so you know, we're hosting local law enforcement at the facility this Friday, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for a walkthrough and to continue the conversation about how the facility will be used once it is open. I know our security leadership has reached out to Hampton Police and Hampton Sheriff's Department, and we hope some representatives from Hampton will be able to participate. We will even serve them lunch. We look forward to having you at the ribbon-cutting ceremony later this year, which we expect will be sometime in October. Please know you're welcome anytime between now and then. We would be

happy to show you the progress we're making at the facility. Thanks again for your consideration of this request.

Mayor Tuck closed the public hearing.

A motion was made by Councilmember Billy Hobbs and seconded by Councilmember Martha Mugler, that the Fiscal Year 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Plan be accepted as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

6. [23-0112](#) Public Hearing and Adoption of the FY2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) Annual Action Plan

Attachments: [Presentation](#)
[HUD Annual Action Plan 2023-2024](#)

Ms. Bunting introduced Neighborhood and Housing Division Manager Jonathan McBride to make the presentation on the proposed uses for CDBG and HOME in the next fiscal year.

Mr. McBride shared that this is part of a five-year consolidated plan that Council adopted in 2020 that lays out priorities for the City during this time. The consolidated plan has to address priorities among decent housing, suitable living environment, and economic opportunities. He stated that Hampton is an entitlement community, which means we get funds from Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annually to appropriate towards housing and community development activities.

The two programs that Hampton receives funding from are the CDBG and HOME program. Under the CDBG program, all activities are required to meet one of three broad national objectives which are: benefiting low to moderate-income persons; aiding in the prevention of slums and blight; or meeting an urgent need.

The CDBG allocation has remained relatively flat over time and has decreased slightly this last year. The anticipated allocation this year from CDBG is around \$914,000. Mr. McBride provided a comparison of activities from this year and last year to show the anticipated changes in funding. Increased funding has been added for additional staffing for housing services, which is under the housing authority, to help handle the increase in applications and move those projects along quickly. Over the years, neighborhood staff that were under planning administration have been

moved back under the City fund resulting in a reduction in the plan administration number. At the same time, there has been an increase in code enforcement so there's been a swap of staff between neighborhoods and codes under this funding.

The HOME program objectives include: expanding the supply of decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing; strengthening the ability of local governments to provide housing; and expanding the capacity of non-profit community-based housing development organizations. The City receives more program income because of the resale of homes that are typically associated with the activities under HOME. This year's allocation is increasing slightly to \$575,000. There is an anticipated program income of about \$120,000 which goes back into the activities for HOME.

Mr. McBride provided a breakdown of activities. One of the activities with the largest increase in funding is homeowner rehabilitation whose funds go towards waitlist activities. There is a decrease in homebuyer assistance which allows for more focus on new construction and rehabilitation. The City is also required to submit a percentage to the Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO). He noted that the only certified CHDO in Hampton is the Habitat for Humanity of the Peninsula. There is also an increase in HOME administration funding to address service needs.

The draft Annual Action Plan was made available for public comment for 30 days beginning March 27th. No comments were received from the public during that time. Public hearing comments will be received at tonight's meeting, after which the public comment period will be closed. Once approved by Council, which is expected at tonight's meeting, the plan will be submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for review and approval by the end of May.

Mr. McBride provided an update on the waitlist items which originated from people who called asking for assistance around HOME renovations and rehabilitation. Over the last year, the Housing Authority has been doing call-ups of about 30 to 50 households at a time from the list based on a first-in, first-out basis, and will be continuing through this year to get through the next 200 on the list. With \$2 million in City funds that were allocated in 2022, and the reallocation of approximately \$1.3 million of CDBG/HOME funds in late 2022/early 2023, the Hampton Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) hopes to move through the list more quickly. The hiring of additional staff members will help with that process.

In response to Mayor Tuck, Mr. McBride explained that there are two, one is working on the housing processing side taking applications and counseling individuals who are looking for assistance, and the other is rehab staff.

Mr. McBride provided a breakdown of the 2022 rehab call-up applicants. There were 80 individuals who were called. Of the 39 that applied, there are 10 waiting to submit the required documentation. Some are being scoped out and bid now. There are seven currently underway and six that have been completed and paid. He noted that one of the biggest challenges they've found besides internal staffing is finding contractors willing to abide by the HUD guidelines and go through the reporting that's required to participate in the program. Part of the staff's role, in addition to doing inspections, is going out and recruiting contractors to do the work.

Mr. McBride confirmed for Councilman Brown that they have gone through 130 of 300 applications on the waitlist with six completed and paid. He explained that because of the timeline in which the federal funds must be spent, they are using those funds first and then will use the \$2 million allocated by the City.

Councilman Brown stated that this has been going on a long time and he, and possibly the other Council members, get calls from people needing rehab, winterization, heating, etc. and some have gone through the winter without any assistance. He stated that this should be a priority and asked what it would take to speed the process up.

Mr. McBride shared that 56 were called up in January. Of the 30 applicants they received, they are working with 12 on submitting the required paperwork, 16 are under review, and two either did not qualify or dropped out of the program.

Vice Mayor Gray asked what happened to the 26 of the 56 who were called but did not apply. Mr. McBride explained that because of the age and length of the list, there are people who have sold their houses and/or moved out.

Vice Mayor Gray agreed with Councilman Brown that he would like to speed up the process as much as possible because a lot of people have been waiting a long time to get their projects done.

Mayor Tuck opened the public hearing. There were no speakers signed up so he closed the public hearing.

A motion was made by Councilman Hobbs and was seconded by Councilman Brown that the FY2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) Annual Action Plan be accepted.

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

7. [23-0067](#) Public Hearing to Receive Citizens' Comments relative to the Proposed Effective Real Property Tax Increase (PROPOSED TAX RATE DECREASE FROM \$1.18 TO \$1.16 PER \$100 OF ASSESSED VALUE)

Ms. Bunting explained that state law requires that a public hearing be conducted when an annual real estate reassessment results in an increase in the real estate tax levy that is more than 101% or 1% increase in the prior year's tax levy in order for that locality to levy a tax rate that would generate more than that one percent above the prior year's assessment. Our current real estate property tax rate is \$1.18 per \$100 of assessed value. The current assessed value of real property excluding additional assessments due to new construction, where improvements to property exceeds last year's total assessed value of real property by 8.43%. The new real estate tax revenue in the budget is due solely to the growth and the value of the real estate in the City of Hampton. This public hearing was duly advertised in the daily press on April 16, 2023, in accordance with the Code of Virginia. I will add although the state calculations looking at anything above 1% suggest that there is an effective increase in the tax rate, we are proposing an actual rate decrease from \$1.18 to \$1.16 in the manager's recommended budget.

Mayor Tuck opened the public hearing. He welcomed Ms. Teresa Schmidt. Ms. Schmidt greeted Council and made the following comments: since 2021, our home assessment has increased 97% and our other properties on the average of 42%. I used to believe that although our tax rate was higher than some of our other localities in the surrounding communities, it was because we were lower in our assessments, so we were paying a reasonable rate. I no longer believe this is the case. From what I can see it appears our neighboring localities have not had this substantial assessment increases, other than Suffolk and Chesapeake, yet their property taxes are only \$1.09 and \$1.05 respectfully (respectively). I understand the need to attract and retain employees by increasing their wages, but our desire should also be that our officers, our firefighters, and other City employees live within our City. Let's not push them and others over to other localities where they can pay 78 cents in York County and \$1.13 in Poquoson. If you're a homeowner like me, I'm sure you've seen investors constantly trying to buy your property. The last thing we all want to see in Hampton is being sold out to corporations who buy our properties, increase the rent rate, and become detached slumlords. At this time we're all just trying to get by. So please consider this until the market stabilizes. Look at what \$1.12 or even \$1.14 would allow you to accomplish and still maintain the integrity of our communities.

Thank you.

There were no other speakers signed up and Mayor Tuck closed the public hearing.

Ms. Bunting clarified for the record that tonight is just a public hearing and there is no vote on this tonight.

8. [23-0114](#) Public Hearing to Receive Citizens' Comments Regarding the City Manager's Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2024

Ms. Bunting stated that an extensive presentation was done at the last meeting in the afternoon session. The budget is available online and in the public libraries. The first reading and voting on the budget will occur next Wednesday, May 3rd, which is a special evening session. The second and final reading will take place the following week on May 10th.

Mayor Tuck opened the public hearing. There were no speakers signed up and he closed the public hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Glass read the protocol for public comment.

Mayor Tuck welcomed the first speaker, Ms. Beverly Alston. Ms. Alston greeted Council and made the following comments: I am a new resident in the City of Hampton and I have some concerns. I see a lot of infrastructure construction going on around the City. I live near the Settlers Landing downtown area and I noticed off LaSalle Avenue where I travel to and from work every day that there are no lines to divide which side of the highway you need to be driving on. There's no dotted line, no solid lines. And you come in towards downtown Hampton towards Pembroke Avenue, there's a railroad track. There are no major lines as to how far you can pull up until the railroad track. There is no emergency, nothing saying emergency. And I don't even know if the railroad track is dead or alive or whatever. But there's nothing there to say that maybe there's a train coming, put some rails up or how far you can come up to, you know, the railroad track. There are no, there are no visible parting lines. And to me, that is a major safety issue. I'm thinking common sense. We know the ride on this side or that side, but it helps as far as being safe. So we have some guidelines on the highway to let us know what side of the street to ride on. Now, there's a lot of infrastructure construction going on. But that section of LaSalle Avenue is concrete. It is not something that can be asphalted. It needs to me, major repairs. Now I have only been living in the City since June of last year. And if I noticed this, and I have only been here since June, I can imagine those who have been here for years noticing it. But being that I'm beginning to pay taxes in the City of Hampton, it was my responsibility to come and voice my concern as to you know,

the safety of this highway. This is not even 100 feet stretch of highway and I would hate for some type of fatality or accident to happen before something gets done about it. There was a major pothole there up under the underpass. I called the 311 a couple of times. They did, after a little while, come and repair it, asphalt it. After a couple of weeks, they did paint lines but that was as far as they went, they only painted the asphalt as far as what they had repaired. I didn't think that was the right thing to do. But they did repair the big pothole that was there. But I just thought I would come here and voice my concern as to this being a safety issue to me in this little stretch of highway in which I live in the City of Hampton. Thank you.

Mayor Tuck welcomed the next speaker, Mr. Eric Richards. Mr. Richards greeted Council and made the following comments: The first thing I wanted to talk to you about tonight was the first thing I observed. I've just been attending the meetings just a month ago. And I want to be a regular here and I'm a community activist. There's a street that I pick up that got dirty again, but I picked it up again. And I have a goal to clean up all of Hampton while I'm here, someday. But the first thing I noticed is, I really want to be helpful, is I notice people come in here asking for millions of dollars, tens of thousands of dollars for investments, or for their projects, for this, for that. And the first thing I thought is I remembered the TV show Shark Tank. And I envisioned all of you as the sharks, the investors, even though you're on a team, and you're not going up against each other. And I know that there are definitely rules and restrictions with how you have to allocate your budget, but I was just thinking there must be some way that that we can get a return on investment somehow to battle the deficit when people come in here. And the first thing I was thinking is that hospitals are always inventing new medical equipment. I don't know what everyone's doing here but perhaps you give the money to the hospitals and they buy what they need. But I was thinking maybe if you cut the hospital out, and you could get around the rule, I'm sure you guys are mostly non-profit, it just has to go for stuff, you can't play around with things. But if there's any way you could deal with a company directly that's producing medical equipment and make an investment there. I look for things online, stocks, business. My strategy is what's new and what has a patent on it. And you know, sometimes you find some interesting things. The other thing I was thinking about is schools. Hampton City Council really needs to be involved in education as you are. But they need to remember the City Council for when they succeed, wanting to come back here and build business here and help out. I'm almost out of time. The last thing I wanted to say is there's a street, the last lady reminded me, but it's with the overpass ramp on East Mercury Street. I'll give you the address, but I got five seconds left. It's I have to go there to work every day across the sidewalk.

Mayor Tuck welcomed the next speaker Ms. Katherine Dermanis. Ms. Dermanis greeted Council and made the following comments: I live in the Buckroe area and I

am speaking as a private citizen tonight, and not part of any organization, steering committee, or board that I may or may not have a leadership role in. I attended the forum for the Buckroe Carousel. I've watched as they presented four proposals. However, the stakeholders that were not mentioned in those proposals, one was Parks and Rec, and one, the most important stakeholder, was the citizens of Hampton who in 1989 raised the funds. The citizens raised the funds to build and restore the carousel and to build the pavilion. I have the annual report from 1989, which was mailed to every citizen in Hampton, that details all the fundraisers and things that were sold. Catch the Carousel Spirit, friends of the carousel, businesses, and citizens across the City of Hampton. This was a City-wide citizen fundraiser that built that pavilion in the present location. Two questions I asked at that forum. One, how would it be paid? And I was told, "Well, these are only proposals. We haven't gotten that far". My second question was concerning the safety of removing the carousel, disassembling it, and reassembling it. Where will it be stored? How will it be stored? Again, the answer was, "This is just proposals. We haven't gotten that far". I think before you can make any kind of decision on the carousel, you must have a plan. You must have a plan on how it's going to be stored, and who's going to pay for it in case there are any unforeseen hiccups later on. You have a difficult job to do for the City. And I respect all of you for your hard work. But in order to make a clear, clear decision on this, acknowledge the citizens of Hampton who worked tirelessly for this campaign and keep the carousel where it is at its present location. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Tuck welcomed the next speaker Mr. Simon Purnell. Mr. Purnell greeted Council and made the following comments: At this moment, I like to invoke the spirit of my ancestors within me for allowing me this opportunity to share with you the commemorative efforts of two very influential African American leaders, Huey P. Newton, and Bobby Seale, in establishing the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party was established in Oakland, California in 1966. The Black Panther Party was originally incorporated as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and was initially established to monitor and protect our African American oppressed communities from police brutality. While establishing the organization they managed to develop a set of goals and objectives which they demanded from the government. These goals consisted of ten objectives which they refer to as points. Here are the ten points. Point one, we want the power to determine the destiny of our black and oppressed communities. Point two, we want full employment for our people. Point three, we want an immediate end to the robbery of the capitalist nations. Point four, we want decent shelter, and decent housing suitable for human living conditions. Point five, we want decent education that teaches us our role in society. Point six, we want to be exempt from military service. Point seven, we want an immediate end to police brutality. Point eight, we want black people free from prisons and jails. Point nine, we want black people given a retrial from the prisons and the jails. Point

ten, we want better land, better housing, we want better shelter, we want better clothing, we want more peace, and more justice. All of this came into the realization after watching Dickon Mitchell, the Prime Minister of Grenada, speak at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022 asking for the same requests as a Black Panther Party fifty years ago. Thank you.

Mayor Tuck welcomed the next speaker Ms. Rebecca Knick. Ms. Knick greeted Council and made the following comments: I just want to talk a little bit about the report released from Hampton Fire regarding the Township fire. I am extremely grateful that we are starting to look at that fire and this report was released. This is a really, really good thing. And it's a great first step. But where this report falls short, is in a few areas. Number one, it omits quite a bit of information and data. Number two, it is not transparent in a few areas. And number three, there are a few things in there that are not exactly true. And one of the things that I would really like to ask Council to help me out with is, the first question we need to ask is, who is on the peer review panel? That's really important. Our Fire Chief says that they're subject matter experts, they are at the top of their field. And if that's true, that's really important for us to know, because they're part of the investigation. And I think transparency of that is a super important point. And we want to have confidence in this report. But that can't happen as it stands. Systems don't fail or succeed on one single individual. But in this case, the blame was put on a single individual, as only one person was reprimanded for that fire. So why do I come to you? It is because the citizens elect you. And the key to building back trust is transparency. Being honest is the only way to establish trust with your community. I don't speak for everyone, of course, but I do speak for some firefighters who are afraid to talk. They know they will either be demoted, reprimanded, or fired if they talk about what happened. The citizens expect better. The firefighters deserve better. And I recognize you may not be read in on all the details. But this is the time for you to start asking questions. It's important. It's going to matter because Hampton's reputation is going to ride on this one. It's not going away. We're not going away. It's going to get pushed, it's important. These guys matter. And this report is just the first step. I'm glad we took it, but it's going to keep going and going. It's a great first step. But I need you guys to start asking the questions. Ask your City management questions. Keep pushing for important information.

Mayor Tuck referred Ms. Alston to the Director of Public Works, who was at the back of Council chambers, for her concerns about the markings on LaSalle.

In response to Ms. Dermanis' concerns about the safety of moving the carousel, Mayor Tuck stated that he does not know how it will be done, but that the carousel is valued and he does not believe anything would be done that would cause damage. Ms. Bunting added that a report was presented at today's afternoon session about

the public information and input sessions and what they heard from the public because there were repetitive comments about possibly Bluebird Gap Farm. The consultant was asked to come in and share what it might look like and what it might cost there. Staff suggested to Council that they take a little more than a month to let the information sit with the community to see if people liked that option or not, or if they remain where they were in the early days. A public comment session will be held at the June meeting of City Council. She stated that no decision is going to be made before the June meeting to provide an opportunity for everyone to hear the information from the architect about what could be possible at Bluebird Gap Farm. The other options remain on the table including leaving it where it is or moving it to Buckroe or Mill Point Park. She noted that nobody spoke in favor of Mill Point Park other than the Downtown Hampton Development Partnership (DHDP). The other options had detractors and supporters so staff wanted to provide the updated information and give the public and Council a chance to think about it before coming back in June for public comment in the traditional Council chambers format.

Ms. Bunting said that while she doesn't think it's proper for her to respond here about the fire report, she stated for the record that, "this Council and I do not tolerate retaliation in any form. So if there are any individuals with regard to this issue or any other issue that might be before us as a City management matter, they can feel free to come to me and if I find out about any retaliatory actions, I will deal with that swiftly and promptly."

GENERAL ITEMS

[23-0117](#) Consideration of an Appointment to the Planning Commission
A motion was made by Councilman Hobbs that Michael Harris be appointed to the unexpired portion of a term on the Planning Commission until November 30, 2024. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Councilmember Bowman, Councilmember Brown, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Harper, Councilmember Hobbs, Councilmember Mugler and Mayor Tuck

REPORTS BY CITY MANAGER, CITY COUNCIL, STAFF, COMMITTEES

There were no reports.

MISCELLANEOUS NEW BUSINESS

There were no items of new business.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

**Contact Info:
Clerk of Council, 757-727-6315, council@hampton.gov**

Donnie R. Tuck
Mayor

Katherine K. Glass, CMC
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council _____