



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 Jimmy Gray
Councilmember Eleanor Weston Brown
Councilmember Steven L. Brown
Councilmember Linda D. Curtis
Councilmember W.H. "Billy" Hobbs
Councilmember Chris Snead

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

Wednesday, May 22, 2019

1:00 PM

Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Tuck called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. All members of the City Council were present.

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

DONNIE R. TUCK PRESIDED

AGENDA

Mayor Tuck announced that a government club from Bethel High School was present in the audience. He asked them to stand to be recognized and thanked them for being here.

1. [19-0179](#) Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Presentation on Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel (HRBT) Expansion Project and Traffic Concerns

Attachments: [VDOT Presentation](#)
[Staff Presentation](#)

City Manager Mary Bunting introduced Mr. James Utterback, Director of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), who provided a presentation to Council. She also introduced Mr. Jason Mitchell, Public Works Director, who provided a staff presentation to Council. She stated that Mr. Mike Corwin, VDOT Hampton Roads District Traffic

Engineer, was present to answer any questions about how the State can assist with temporary traffic issues caused by this project. She noted that this will be the largest infrastructure project in the country.

Mayor Tuck asked if VDOT would assist the contractors in getting permits so they could move forward with the project. Mr. Utterback stated that VDOT will be working with the contractors, but it is the contractors' responsibility to get the permits in place.

Mayor Tuck asked if the groundbreaking for the project would take place in 2021. Mr. Utterback stated that the launching pit construction to house the larger equipment for the project will be beginning earlier than that, but actual roadway work will begin in 2021.

Mayor Tuck noted that he had heard rumors that the tunnel could impact the Woodlands Golf Course, resulting in the loss of the 7th green. He asked if there will be any anticipated impact. Mr. Utterback stated that the construction on the roads near Hampton should not affect the Woodlands Golf Course in any way.

Councilman Brown stated that this project was long overdue for this region. He noted that he has questions about the economic impact and the job creation for this area. Mr. Utterback stated the construction itself will provide significant opportunities for local contractors. VDOT had a meeting in April at a builders' conference in this area, where they discussed opportunities for firms in the area. There is a high percentage opportunity for both Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) and Small, Women & Minority Owned (SWaM) businesses, which equates to a significant dollar value. VDOT is still fine-tuning that project goal. They believe there could be as many as 30 cranes and 50 barges during the marine construction phase, and anywhere between 1,000 and 1,200 craft laborers. He noted that small, local firms are already assisting with the design phase.

Councilman Hobbs stated that when the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel was being built, it required trained union laborers. He asked if this was still the case. Mr. Utterback stated that they are not required to use union labor.

Vice Mayor Gray stated that he knows there has been some outreach for SWaM-certified local contractors, and there have been some goals worked into the contract. He asked how this will be tracked, if it will be done at the end, or with some frequency throughout the project. Mr. Utterback stated that progress reports will be required monthly. A VDOT Civil Rights employee will be assigned full time to the project. VDOT will also assist with smaller firms that do not have the back office support needed, so they can still be included on the project.

Vice Mayor Gray noted that there will be six lanes, or three lanes in each direction, on the road leading into the tunnel. However, the tunnel itself will have four lanes in each direction. He asked how this would work. Mr. Utterback stated that inside the tunnels, there will be drivable shoulders, where drivers can use the shoulder as a lane during specific peak traffic hours, similar to the drivable shoulders used closer to Virginia Beach.

Vice Mayor Gray asked if the road widening projects on the Norfolk and Hampton sides will be done simultaneously with the tunnel construction. Mr. Utterback stated that the marine construction is the critical, longest part. The exact method of construction has yet to be determined. He stated that he believes all the work will start at the same time, once the contractors have the full notice to proceed. They are required to keep two lanes open in each direction at all times by contract. The sequencing is still being determined.

Mr. Utterback noted that there are significant penalties if the contractor has not completed construction by the November 2025 deadline.

Mr. Utterback introduced Ms. Paula Miller, VDOT Communications Manager of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project, who provided information on the outreach that had been done relating to this project. Additional information on the project, including videos and livestreaming once the construction starts, as well information on requesting additional outreach opportunities are available at www.hrbtexpansion.org.

Councilman Brown asked if VDOT was attending any job fairs, or reaching out to the Peninsula Workforce Development offices to get the notices out about jobs available for this project. Ms. Miller stated that she can add those organizations to the communication outreach.

Ms. Bunting stated that the City has been working with the businesses and residents in Phoebus and Downtown about their concerns with the spillover traffic resulting from Interstate 64 (I-64) backups.

Councilwoman Curtis asked if traffic circles were being proposed to replace stoplights. Mr. Mitchell stated that this is a problematic practice in high-volume traffic, rather, they would be installed where there are no stoplights currently.

Mayor Tuck asked about the “do not block the box” options. He asked if the City would also be retiming lights to adjust for the installation of these “boxes.”

Mr. Mitchell stated that traffic lights will be retimed to keep traffic moving as quickly

as possible. The purpose of the “do not block the box” option is to keep cars from blocking the intersections so traffic can continue to flow.

Mayor Tuck noted that it is 45 miles per hour (mph) for most of Mercury Boulevard, but he had thought the speed was reduced once a person crossed Woodland Road. Mr. Mitchell confirmed that it is 45mph almost to Old Buckroe Road.

Ms. Bunting stated that many of these options would require action, either administratively or by Council. She noted that ramp metering is not something the City can do on its own, but would require working with VDOT. Items such as traffic circles would require much more conversation, but can be done within the City’s purview.

Councilman Brown asked if these recommendations are based on what the community has communicated. Mr. Mitchell stated that there have been several conversations and the Partnership for a New Phoebus brought several of these suggestions forward. Ms. Bunting stated that the Hampton Police Division (HPD) also worked with the community, not just Public Works.

Councilwoman Curtis noted that the summer season is upon the City, which causes even more traffic issues than usual. The start of the tunnel construction will have even more of an impact on this area. She has a feeling of urgency to implement some of these suggestions. She asked if there was the capacity to put some of these options in place quickly. Mr. Mitchell said that they can have some of them done as early as next week.

Councilwoman Snead stated that she also feels a sense of urgency, but she would like to discuss some of the options more before proceeding, such as the traffic circles. She is concerned that putting a traffic circle at Settlers Landing will only exacerbate issues on Pembroke Avenue and Mercury Boulevard. She stated that she also does not want to raise expectations that this will solve all the issues the City is currently experiencing. Mr. Mitchell stated that he believes some areas will see immediate relief, but it will take some time for there to be a more widespread relief. Councilwoman Snead noted that the volume of traffic will not change.

Vice Mayor Gray noted some of these issues began when traffic apps began suggesting Phoebus as a way to circumvent traffic on I-64. However, as more traffic begins to build up in Phoebus and with all the lights a person has to travel through to get back on I-64, Phoebus becomes a non-viable option. It takes longer to travel through that area than it would to just stay on I-64. He asked if it would correct some of the issues if the traffic apps no longer suggested Phoebus as an option. Mr. Mitchell stated that it will help mitigate some of the issues, but ultimately, until the

HRBT is widened, the City will continue to see these issues.

Ms. Bunting stated that traffic app companies tend to not want to have conversations with localities, so she and the administration in Norfolk are working with the State to get an audience with those traffic app companies. She also noted that they are consumer driven, so if consumers are inputting that the route is not a good choice that will help with preventing it from being an option on the traffic apps. There is also discussion to feed information directly to the traffic apps from traffic management systems within the City. This option is harder because it involves third party vendors, but it is something the City wants to work on.

Mayor Tuck noted that there are issues with Settlers Landing, with individuals traveling on the inside lane to get down to Dr. Harvey Way, then moving across two lanes of traffic to make a right turn. On Mercury Boulevard, there is an installation that separates people from turning immediately into Target. He asked if having something similar on Settlers Landing to prevent the issue was viable. Mr. Mitchell stated that staff will look into that.

Mayor Tuck asked if it was possible to do a “no left turn” sign from Mallory onto the I-64 access road between the times of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to help deter traffic issues and change the behavior of those who come through Phoebus to get to I-64. He noted that this will inconvenience some individuals in Phoebus, but they have other options. Mr. Mitchell stated that staff will look into that.

Mayor Tuck stated that some discussion needs to be done before some of the options move forward. Ms. Bunting asked if it was just traffic circles that were at issue, and if staff could move forward with other options. There was general consensus from Council to move forward with the items other than the traffic circles.

Mayor Tuck asked if the traffic circle was proposed for Settlers Landing, which was confirmed by Ms. Bunting.

Presented by Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) representatives James S. Utterback, Director of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project, and Paula Miller, Communications Manager of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project.

Following the VDOT presentation, Jason Mitchell, Interim Public Works Director, presented information on traffic concerns and possible solutions in Downtown Hampton and Phoebus.

REGIONAL ISSUES

There were no regional issues.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Tuck noted that he had a Town Hall at the Senior Center last night. There is a rumor that if a student was in line at the cafeteria and did not have money to pay, the schools take the food away from the student. He confirmed with the Hampton City School Board Chairman last night that they do not take the food away from the student if they cannot pay for it. Other provisions are in place, such as settling the bill at a later time.

Mayor Tuck announced that he will not be in attendance at this evening's meetings due to several other meetings he must attend. Vice Mayor Gray will be overseeing those sessions in his stead.

CLOSED SESSION

Before City Council entered the Lawson Conference Room for closed session, they answered questions from the Bethel High School students who were visiting.

2. [19-0183](#) Closed session pursuant to Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3711.A.1, .3, .5, .6, .7 and .8 to discuss the City Manager, City Attorney and/or the Clerk of Council; to discuss or consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and/or the disposition of publicly held real property in the areas of Coliseum Central, Downtown Hampton, and Wythe where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the city; to discuss a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in Hampton; to discuss or consider the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interests of the city would be adversely affected; to consult with legal counsel and staff pertaining to actual or probable litigation related to regional matters; and to consult with legal counsel employed or retained

by the city regarding specific legal matters related to local housing codes requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

At 1:58 p.m., a motion was made by Councilmember Billy Hobbs and seconded by Councilmember Steven Brown, that this Closed Session - Motion be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

CERTIFICATION

3. [19-0184](#) Resolution Certifying Closed Session

Shortly prior to the end of the closed session, Mayor Tuck departed for other meeting commitments. At 4:50 p.m. a motion was made by Councilmember Billy Hobbs and seconded by Councilmember Linda Curtis, that this Closed Session - Certification be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Councilmember Weston Brown, Councilmember Brown, Councilmember Curtis, Vice Mayor Gray, Councilmember Hobbs and Councilmember Snead

Out: 1 - Mayor Tuck

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Donnie R. Tuck
Mayor

Katherine K. Glass, CMC
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council _____