



# 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 Chris L. Bowman*  
*Councilmember Steven L. Brown*  
*Councilmember Hope L. Harper*  
*Councilmember Billy Hobbs*  
*Councilmember Martha Mugler*

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

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**Wednesday, April 26, 2023**

**1:00 PM**

**Council Chambers**

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### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Tuck called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. with all members of the City Council being 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

### AGENDA

1. [23-0119](#) Briefing on Hampton Carousel

**Attachments:** [Presentation - McCormick](#)  
[Presentation - Tingle](#)

City Manager, Mary Bunting, introduced Ms. Robin McCormick, Communications Strategist, to present an update on the results of the public information and input sessions held regarding the Carousel. Ms. McCormick shared that 60 people attended the in-person session that was held at the Convention Center on March 21st. The Facebook Live session on March 28th had approximately 800 viewers and 1,074 engagements. She explained that engagements are the result of comments and likes.

Ms. McCormick shared that, in regards to the first option to leave the Carousel in its current location, the majority of people said, it should be left in its current location close to the Hampton History Museum and the Air and Space Center. They felt the

location makes downtown unique and is ideal for families and school trips. Several questions came up during the sessions including, why can't the carousel remain at its current location; and why is there no plan to relocate it within the newly proposed park at its current location. Other concerns expressed were a lack of understanding about why there can't be the Carousel and a market area.

In regards to the second option, Ms. McCormick shared that there were no comments on Facebook that were in favor of moving the Carousel to Mill Point Park.

Ms. McCormick provided feedback regarding relocating the Carousel to Buckroe. She shared that there is some sentiment for this location. The Carousel survived hurricanes and floods for over half a century in Buckroe. Many people felt it should be returned to this location. It is already zoned properly, has ample parking, and can be preserved and accessible to the public. There were concerns expressed about maintenance, including salt, sand, wind, and the effects of potential surge flooding.

Ms. McCormick shared that, at the end of the Facebook session, it was asked if Blue Bird Gap Farm had been considered.

Ms. McCormick shared that from the public aspect, the next step is to ask the Downtown Hampton Development Partnership (DHDP) to consider designing a plan that includes the Carousel within Riverfront Park. As Ms. McCormick mentioned, there is sentiment for Buckroe Beach provided concerns about parking, flooding, and increased maintenance are addressed. Citizens would also like for the City to study the feasibility of moving the Carousel to Bluebird Gap Farm.

Ms. Bunting introduced Mr. Tom Tingle, AIA, Guernsey Tingle Architecture, Interiors, and Planning, to present information on the possibility of moving the Carousel to Bluebird Gap Farm. Mr. Tingle shared that, as they did with the options previously presented, they did a high-level evaluation of Bluebird Gap. He noted that it is not an engineered study and there has been no survey of the existing property. He presented an aerial image showing the first option (Option 5A) at the entrance to the Farm off Pine Chapel Road, and the second option (Option 5B) which is within the current Farm area, closer to the existing facilities.

Mr. Tingle provided an overview of flooding and environmental issues. He displayed an image of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area buffers that wrap around the wetlands. This area generally contains wetlands and/or significant amounts of tidal water. There are some flood areas to the north between the buffers and Interstate 664, primarily where the Bluebird Gap Farm is currently located.

Option 5A sits outside of the flood zone at an elevation of 12 to 13 feet above sea

level. Mr. Tingle shared photos of the entrance which is very visible to passers-by. He shared a site plan rendering of the location which includes parking, and room for future addition of amenities such as a miniature golf course or event pavilion. The rendering showed the initial area proposed for the relocation which includes the Carousel, a restroom building, and a small parking lot. The strengths of this location include its location within the Coliseum Central area, visibility, later operating hours than the Farm, and the opportunity for a special event space that won't disrupt Farm operations. It would also create an iconic identity for the Farm entrance. The weaknesses include the need to add site infrastructure which consists of parking, utilities, and restrooms. Future expansion, beyond the initial phase, could be affected by one of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area buffers.

Option 5B sits at a current elevation of 8 to 9 feet above sea level. Mr. Tingle shared photos of the location which is nestled among the existing agricultural buildings and has an open meadow event space adjacent to the entrance. There is currently an old farm windmill that would need to be relocated to another area of the Farm. The strengths of this location include its location within the Coliseum Central area, proximity and accessibility to Farm visitors, the potential to share staff with Farm operations, and existing infrastructure. Mr. Tingle noted that the Farm had approximately 40,000 visitors from January through mid-April of this year. The weaknesses include operating hours that conform to park hours (9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. during summer months), the need to relocate the windmill, and the additional elevation that would need to be added for the flood zone.

Parks and Recreation staff also expressed concerns about the potential mismatch of character and theme between the Farm and Carousel.

Mr. Tingle provided budget cost estimates. The estimates include the costs to relocate the Carousel, erect a new building to house it, and other associated costs.

Option 5A is estimated to cost just over \$2.8 million which includes the access drive, utilities, and site construction. The required restrooms and 20-30 parking spaces that need to be built will cost an additional \$475,000.

Option 5B is estimated to cost over \$2.5 million and includes fill to raise the site elevation and minimal site utilities and support.

Mr. Tingle provided a review of the strengths, weaknesses, and costs for each of the four options presented at last month's meeting.

Councilman Bowman commented that the Farm currently has a stone gravel overflow parking area, and asked where the new parking area would be placed.

Mr. Tingle stated that the new parking lot would be a small lot off of the entrance drive. He shared that one of the future thoughts for the Farm is that additional permanent overflow parking will probably be needed and could be placed in the same location. Councilman Bowman asked where overflow parking would be put if placed inside the Farm. Mr. Tingle stated that while they did not look at that, he believes the thought would be that the location near the entrance could also be used for Farm overflow. Mr. Dave McCauley, Director of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services, agreed with Mr. Tingle that the new parking area is intended for use for the Carousel and mini-golf venue proposed. The gravel area that sits behind the current parking lot will also be improved and expanded.

Councilwoman Mugler referenced slide number three depicting the wetlands and asked if the portion of the property closest to the interstate also has wetland issues. Mr. Tingle shared that the area is within a flood zone but there are no wetlands on that portion.

Ms. Bunting explained that because Blue Bird Gap Farm came up late in the process, staff proposed giving another month for additional feedback and scheduling a public comment opportunity at the June Council meeting. The recommendation is that a decision be made either at the June or July meeting.

Mayor Tuck asked if the miniature golf course would be done at the same time or later and what the cost would be. Mr. McCauley stated that everything is dependent on the budget but that the Carousel would be the first phase and the miniature golf would be done during the second phase.

Ms. Bunting stated that money has been set aside for a miniature golf course with the initial thought of it being located at Buckroe. Bluebird was a second option if there was no support for it in Buckroe. Mr. Tingle presented the option to have it along with the Carousel at Bluebird just as he had done for Buckroe. Ms. Bunting stated that it can go with the Carousel or separate from the Carousel.

Mayor Tuck commented that the proposal for Buckroe included a nine-hole miniature golf course, whereas the Bluebird includes an 18-hole course. He asked if each location could have a nine-hole course. Ms. Bunting stated that it would probably cost a little more and indicated that staff would find out the cost.

Ms. Bunting confirmed with Mayor Tuck that the plan would be to hold public comment in June. She stated that she would make a summary statement of this afternoon's activities and the plan for public comment at this evening's meeting.

2. [23-0118](#) Budget Briefings: City Manager's Recommended Fiscal Year

## 2024 Budget

Ms. Bunting commented that this is an open discussion for Council to have discussion and ask questions about the budget and if Council prefers, commentary could be held at the evening meeting. She did state that one of the things being proposed in the budget is moving to a step system. In her first meeting with police and fire employees, they discovered that things were not working the way they had intended. She stated that this is a public commitment and they are working to address unintended consequences. Once she has received feedback from the consultant and our HR (Human Resources) on how to address the issues, she will present the information to Council and the staff.

Councilwoman Harper commented that one of the things she would like to look at doing is covering 100% of the health care premium for City employees. She noted that when she spoke with Ms. Bunting and Mr. Daughtry during a previous meeting, Mr. Daughtry indicated that the difference was \$300,000.

Councilwoman Harper felt that with the five-percent increase and the hourly being increased to \$15, she wanted staff to see the difference in their paycheck and not be taken up by health care premiums. She expressed her understanding of inflation but thinks that with the morale of so many employees that could give a little boost and she thinks that covering 100% could be accommodated.

Ms. Bunting replied that staff is looking at how to possibly cover 100% but she cannot say if the extra money can be found until she receives feedback regarding the step program. She acknowledged that several other Council members agree with Councilwoman Harper that it would be nice to be able to do that, and will keep it in mind during future conversations.

Ms. Bunting said that with the 80/20 split, every employee would get enough of a pay increase to sufficiently cover their portion of the premium and still have an increase in take-home pay. During the work session in early March, several options were identified, some of which would not have given everyone an increase. She stated that they were very intentional about identifying an option that would provide for a take-home pay increase.

Councilwoman Harper commented that with the step program, a substantial amount of money is being given to public safety, of which they are more than deserving, but wants to make sure that the City is doing something for the other employees as well.

Ms. Bunting shared that a similar compensation study will be done over the next year for all other employees. She stated that all of the workforce is important to the City but, with the size of the workforce, it is nearly impossible to do everyone at the same

time.

**REGIONAL ISSUES**

There were no regional issues to report on.

**NEW BUSINESS**

There were no items of new business.

**CLOSED SESSION**

3. [23-0068](#) Closed session pursuant to Virginia Code §§ 2.2-3711 A (.1) and (.3) to consider an appointment to the Planning Commission and to discuss the acquisition of property in the Downtown area of the City and the disposition of publicly held property in the Coliseum Central and Buckroe areas of the City, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining or negotiating strategy of the City.

At 1:32 p.m., a motion was made by Councilmember Billy Hobbs and seconded by Councilmember Chris Bowman, that this Closed Session - Motion be approved. 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

4. [23-0117](#) Consideration of an Appointment to the Planning Commission

**CERTIFICATION**

5. [23-0116](#) Resolution Certifying Closed Session

A motion was made by Councilmember Billy Hobbs and seconded by Councilmember Chris Bowman, that this Closed Session - Certification be approved. 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

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

**Contact Info:**

**Clerk of Council, 757-727-6315, [council@hampton.gov](mailto:council@hampton.gov)**

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Donnie R. Tuck  
Mayor

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Katherine K. Glass, CMC  
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council \_\_\_\_\_