

**MINUTES OF WORK SESSION  
OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL  
CITY HALL 10TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
2400 WASHINGTON AVENUE  
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2024, 5:00 P.M.**



**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tina L. Vick; Dr. Patricia P. Woodbury; Curtis D. Bethany III; John R. Eley, III; Marcellus L. Harris III, D. Div.; Phillip Jones; and Cleon M. Long, P.E.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Alan Archer, Robert Pealo, Mabel Washington Jenkins, Darlene Bradberry, Michael Nadol, Lisa Cipriano, Virginia Lovell, Sheila McAllister, Allison Dichoso, Roslyn Gervin, Kimberly Thomas, Florence Kingston, Kimberly Bracy, Ramona Rice, Fire Chief Wesley Rogers, Police Chief Steve Drew, Craig Galant, Frank James, James McElheney, Gloria Washington, Synethia White, Robert Coleman, Jered Grimes, Daniel Collins, Jennifer Privette, Linda Manning, Abbie Domingue, Virginia Blount-Moore, Ralph "Bo" Clayton, David Freeman, Eoghan "Owen" Miller, Kristin Chhim, Tiffany Conatser, Josh Janney, and Zina F. Middleton

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

## **I. Executive Performance Management Plan**

City Manager Archer indicated that a presentation by PFM Group Consulting LLC, would outline the City's initiative to align leadership objectives with Newport News' strategic goals. To achieve this, the City had partnered with PFM Group Consulting LLC to update the Executive Performance Management Plan. He advised that the process involved gathering input from internal and external stakeholders, reviewing past evaluation tools, interviewing City Directors, and Senior Staff, and consulting with high-performing local governments. City Manager Archer shared that the updated plan would enhance accountability for executive leaders and ensure Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and projects align with the City's strategic priorities. He introduced Mr. Michael Nadol, Managing Director, PFM Group Consulting, to provide the update on the Executive Performance Management Plan.

Mr. Nadol expressed appreciation for the opportunity to support the City with the important initiative and support Council and the City Manager. The goals were to assist the City creating a structure and an approach that could continue to better align the work of the directors and leadership within the government with the goals of the City to provide increased direction, accountability, and support of that alignment. He recognized the critical work that the directors and other executives deliver on behalf of the residents and constituents of the City. To provide that kind of recognition and to help attract and retain leadership, but it was not just a study, it was more of the development of a tool that could be implemented to move these goals forward. Mr. Nadol summarized the Executive Performance: Project Goals as follows:

- Align specific leadership-level objectives and actions with overall City of Newport News strategic goals and priorities
- Increased direction and accountability for the actions of executive leadership

- Recognition for the dedication of the City's Directors and other executives – attracting and retaining high caliber leadership
- Updated, implementation-ready executive performance management tools and processes:
  - Goal-setting
  - Evaluation
  - Compensation

Mr. Nadol advised of the following Project Steps:

- Review of the City's current and past performance evaluation tools and approaches for both executives and general employees
- Interview City Directors and Senior Office staff of the City Manager's office to gain locally specific insights into what had worked well and what had been less effective
- Benchmarking of other local governments recognized for strong performance nationally to evaluate practices and tools elsewhere that might be adapted, along with a literature review of best practices
- Collaboration with the City Manager to incorporate feedback on potential models and approaches

Mr. Nadol shared the Findings: Performance Assessment as follows:

- Performance assessments should specify high priority strategic goals – such as major new program and project initiatives, balanced both by recognition that leadership roles included a broader set of critical responsibilities beyond just those specific areas highlighted in any particular year, and that multiple non-controllable factors can impact results
- Consistent with a balanced scorecard approach, the tool should also incorporate prompts for feedback and conversation around multiple, specific, qualitative dimensions of executive roles in addition to highlighted metrics and projects
- Formulaic, check-the-box paperwork should be minimized, with feedback provided in a clear and direct manner that promotes accountability
- Self-evaluation should be a component of the appraisal process to engage directors in reflection and to promote buy-in with their own goals
- Performance-focused assessments should occur twice annually – once at the start of the calendar year to address prior year and new year goals, and the second at mid- year to align with budget and fiscal year discussions

Mr. Nadol provided details of the First-Year Tool as follows:

- PFM developed a three-part Executive Performance Assessment tool aligned with the recommendations
  - A key focus was on **priority goal-setting (Part 1)** in tandem with the City Manager and Assist City Manager (ACM) leadership to align with City Council priorities, and accountability for advancing those goals
  - The format also included prompts for discussion around **key competencies** for executive leadership (**Part 2**)
  - **Self-Assessment and Overall Rating** - For clarity of communication, recognition, and accountability, the format would provide opportunities for self-evaluation leading to an overall appraiser rating of Unsatisfactory or Needs Improvement, Achieves Expectations, Exceeds Expectations, or Exceptional (**Part 3**)
- The tool was broadly consistent with the Citywide FUEL appraisal process, but with modifications targeted for the specific requirements and roles of directors and other senior executives

- PFM expected the tool to evolve as the City continues to build out its broader KPI and balanced scorecard approaches

Mr. Nadol indicated the Priority Goal Setting as follows:

- Focus on a limited number of priority KPIs (3-5) and Projects (1-3) for strong alignment with Citywide strategic priorities
- First-year emphasis on establishing good metrics
- Upfront identification of evaluation criteria, resource requirements, and dependencies
- Status checks at mid-year and year-end, inclusive of explanatory factors (supplementing ongoing communications)

Mr. Nadol shared the Executive Competencies form to capture the following:

- Intended to prompt reflection and to support constructive feedback
- Addresses a range of key competencies to help surface strengths to build on and areas of opportunity for improvement

Mr. Nadol advised that the Overall Assessment would:

- Self-Assessment further prompts reflection and supports two-way conversation
- Overall Appraiser rating and comments provide clarity, recognition, and accountability – and lead into executive compensation approach

Unsatisfactory	Improvement Needed	Achieves Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Exceptional
Not meeting essential requirements of the role.	Not currently meeting certain important requirements of the role. Opportunities to address identified, but not yet consistently met.	Successfully meeting key requirements of the role. Performance consistently meets standards.	Exceeds key requirements of the role. Performance characterized by consistent high achievement.	Far exceeds requirements of the role. Performance consistently delivers outstanding achievement well above expectations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mr. Nadol shared the Findings and Recommended Approach: Executive Compensation as follows:

- Align with the City's newly adopted pay strategy for all employees
- Additional degree of discretionary input from the City Manager to help drive leadership performance
- Benchmarking to inform potential market adjustments (every 3-5 years) and to establish executive pay ranges, tiered by scope and scale of responsibility, bound to overall compensation
- Annual pay adjustments, aligned with general wage increases (GWI) authorized by City Council for the general workforce (which may also take into account annual budget constraints and/or other Council considerations)
- Aggregate executive compensation increases each year would not exceed the GWI provided for all other employees on a percentage basis, but individual executives could receive higher or lower adjustments based on evaluation ratings

Mr. Nadol indicated that aggregate executive compensation increases each year would not exceed the GWI provided for all other Newport News employees on a percentage basis, but individual executives could receive higher or lower increases based on their assessment ratings and the judgment of the City Manager. He shared the following compensation linked to performance:

- If **Unsatisfactory** or **Needs Improvement**, no pay increase
- If **Achieves Expectations**, a pay increase could be provided at the discretion of the City Manager up to 50% of the GWI authorized for general City employee pay. For example, if the general employee pay increased by 2.0%, this executive increase could be no more than 1.0%
- If **Exceeds Expectations**, a pay increase could be provided at the discretion of the City Manager up to 100% of the GWI for general City employees. For example, if that is 2.0%, this executive increase could be no more than 2.0%
- If **Exceptional**, a pay increase could be provided at the discretion of the City Manager up to 100% of the GWI for general City employee pay plus an additional amount of up to 50% of the GWI. For example, if the GWI is 2.0%, this executive increase could be no more than 3.0%

Mr. Nadol provided the next steps as following:

- Council review and approval
- Finalize KPIs/projects aligned with City strategies and priorities, complete individual evaluations
- Effective implementation date – January 2025

Councilman Long inquired about going into the cycle with the performance metrics/benchmarking, had the Directors received what it would take to reach the exceptional rating. He questioned whether they already lined up with the goals that needed to be achieved. City Manager Archer replied that discussion would be included in the roll out as we looked forward to January implementation date. He advised that discussions with Assistant City Managers and the Department Directors would identify the KPIs to track and consider strategic goals, and that information would flow into completion of the appraisal tool and move the process forward.

Councilman Harris questioned once approved by Council and implemented in January 2025, would this be done by the end of the fiscal year or the end of the calendar year. City Manager Archer replied he was requesting flexibility from Council to allow him to make this retrospective to the beginning of the fiscal year. He indicated there was a body of work that was already completed which would need incorporated into the process in order to complete the fiscal year, so that the City was in a position to determine how the employees would rank within these four categories.

City Manager Archer thanked Mr. Nadol for the hard work and appreciated working with him on the Executive Performance Management Plan.

## II. Sustainability Update

City Manager Archer advised that the City was committed to environmentally responsible governance and prioritize sustainability in Goal 7 of our Strategic Plan. As a result, the FY 2025 Budget supported the effort by establishing a dedicated Sustainability Office to enhance the City's initiatives. He advised that staff was provide an update to Council on the Sustainability Office, the broader efforts in environmental justice and climate change, and the City's partnership with the Bloomberg American Sustainability Cities Initiative. He introduced Mr. Eoghan "Owen" Miller, Chief Strategy Officer, to share the presentation and introduce the team.

Mr. Miller advised he would share a brief update on the City's sustainability efforts over the last 9 to 12 months, and some of the existing efforts done over the course of the spring and



the summer. He would further share the Bloomberg American Sustainable Cities (BASC) Initiative that the City had been participating in since March 2024, introduce a number of the members of the Sustainability Team, and looking forward to the next six – nine months.

Mr. Miller shared details of the Sustainability Office which had been in the FY 2025 Budget as follows:

- The office would strive to maximize the benefits of the City’s sustainability initiatives and build a foundation for long-term environmental stewardship by creating meaningful partnerships among employees, residents and community stakeholders
- Utilizing an equitable and data-driven approach, the Office would track its efforts utilizing a range of key performance indicators
- Led by Sustainability Manager

Mr. Miller introduced Ms. Jennifer Privette, Sustainability Manager, Ms. Abbie Dominques, Christopher Newport University (CNU) Senior, Environmental Biology and minoring in Business Administration and Leadership Studies, and Dr. Linda Manning, Associate Professor in the Department of communication at CNU and Director at the Center for Sustainability in Education. Mr. Miller shared that the City was working on Federal, State and Philanthropic Opportunities and advised of the following:

- **Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG)**
  - CPRG program provided nearly \$5 billion in grants to states, local governments, tribes, and territories to develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution
  - City partnered with Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) and neighboring localities to submit an Implementation application which built upon HRPDC’s Comprehensive Climate Action Plan to reduce emissions, improve local air quality, support clean energy workforce development, and identify methods to ensure a just and equitable energy transition in the region
  - Funding request totaled approximately \$98.1 million of which \$13.3 million was for Newport News

Mr. Miller shared the following details for the Community Change Grant (CCG):

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the CCG funding opportunity for environmental and climate justice activities to benefit disadvantage communities
- Projects must reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity
- The City, along with a collection of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), to include the local higher education partners, submitted a Track I application at the beginning of the month designed to address fugitive dust issues in the Southeast Community
- Funding request totaled approximately \$19.6 million

Mayor Jones reminded Council the CCG was one of the biggest levers that the City could take a look to consider coal dust remediation in the Southeast Community. It was going to take a lot of money to figure out a way to remedy the situation. He thanked Mr. Miller, Ms. Privette, the Sustainability Team, Ms. Jerri Wilson, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, for doing a lot of political maneuverings behind the scenes. He stated should the City to get the grant it was a Track I Grant and was going to be up to \$20 million to figure out a way to migrate coal dust whether it was a coal fence or dome. The City could take a look at the requirement for federal dollars which was out of that giant pool of \$2 billion for environmental justice. He advised that it was a rolling application, the City submitted it and should hear back soon.

Mr. Miller advised that the City had been successful with other competitive grants and recently found out the City was awarded from BASC a grant to pursue solar. Trying to make additional solar opportunities available to some of the residents who might not otherwise be able to afford it. He indicated the City was looking to roll out that opportunity in the spring with the partners of Virginia Energy and more information would be forthcoming.

Mr. Miller shared details of the Bloomberg American Sustainable Cities (BASC) as follows:

- In March 2024, Bloomberg Philanthropies announced Newport News was selected as one of 25 U.S. cities to join the inaugural Bloomberg American Sustainable Cities (BASC) cohort
- BASC was a three-year initiative designed to leverage federal and other funding sources to incubate and implement transformative local solutions to build low-carbon, resilient, and economically thriving communities
- Newport News would receive a Bloomberg Philanthropies - funded innovation team (i-team) with up to three dedicated staff with expertise in data analysis, insight development, human-centered design, systems thinking, and project management to bolster city capacity in driving progress on climate mitigation, sustainability, and promoting equitable outcomes

Mr. Miller indicated that BASC sought to provide and make positive climate change that disproportionately impacts Black and other vulnerable populations, exacerbating deep inequality.



Mr. Miller shared that Bloomberg American

Sustainable Cities (BASC) would provide the following:

- **Advance solutions** that would reduce emissions while improving lives and increasing economic opportunity
- **Strengthen city capacity** to partner, create, and implement with community-based organizations and other local stakeholders
- **Leverage and mobilize public, private, and philanthropic resources**

Mr. Miller advised that the Bloomberg American Sustainable Cities (BASC) initiative worked with City halls and community partners and would receive three-years of deep, customized support and shared the following:



Mr. Miller

indicated that BASC support would help cities develop solutions to address unique priorities

and shared example strategies and outcomes:

- Developing or retrofitting affordable housing and increasing home-ownership
- Advancing skills training support in historically redlined neighborhoods
- Connecting communities of color with benefit programs that reduce housing, energy, and transit costs
- Utilizing federal funding to improve air quality in communities with high asthma rates, while building local businesses

Mr. Miller introduced members of the i-Team – Mr. Daniel Collins, i-Team Director, Ms. Vanessa Riquand, Civic Designer, and a third person was anticipated to join the team in the spring 2025.

Mr. Miller shared that the cornerstone was the CORE Team:

- City Hall Staff
- Community-Based Organization(s)
- i-Team



Mr. Miller advised that five world class partners would bring the BASC work to life:

- PolicyLink
- Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins
- NRDC
- Delivery Associates
- Sustainable Cities Fund

Mr. Miller advised that it had been a very busy year thus far related to some of the sustainability and initiatives. He shared what was next:

- BASC Partnership Table
- BASC Implementation Funding Grant—Solar for All pilot with Virginia Energy
- Update the Roadmap to Sustainability
- Identify additional relevant projects and needs for both organization and community
- Track progress

Mr. Miller advised that the Sustainability Team would give additional updates as the process unfolds in the future and certainly over the next three-years – it would be rolled into the City's scorecard so that the Council, but also the community could see some of the progress being made.

Mayor Jones requested that Mr. Miller explain more about the technical assistant when writing a federal grant and how much money that would cost if the City needed an external consultant. Mr. Miller replied he believed approximately \$25,000 for technical assistance. He had no doubt that the technical assistance the City received, which included grant writing, but also technical assistance related to the Community Change Grant was significantly more than that.

Councilwoman Vick questioned how effectively the players with the coal dust companies were working with the committee. Mr. Miller replied the committee had not engaged with the coal dust companies formally yet, as part of the committee or the BASC effort. The City had initial conversations. He believed in some cases the City had more success than others and were really hoping that this effort and DEQ had an air monitoring approach moving forward. The City was hoping that it provided an opportunity to bring everybody to the table and continue those conversations.

Mayor Jones advised that he met with one of the CEO's probably every two months and he was tracking that the City was doing the work and understood it. He indicated it seems to be a lot of goodwill, obviously federal money - \$20 million would be helpful. He shared that the process had been stalled for so long that to even have an opportunity would be great. Mayor Jones indicated the City partnered with Mrs. Yugonda Sample-Jones group (EmPower All), bringing in the community, the City, and CEOs would bring a good resolution and hopefully see great things.

Vice Mayor Bethany inquired about collaboration opportunities as there had been connection to individuals at Ferguson and was wondering about Canon and other opportunities that the City could collaborate on, maybe share best practices. He questioned whether that was a part of the plan. Mr. Miller replied yes, it was something he believed the City could pull into the BASC effort, but it was also something to your point with Ferguson, he indicated he and Ms. Privette had conversations with the partner about the ongoing sustainability efforts, to maximize what the City was doing and to borrow great ideas from others and wanted to ensure the City work with whether it was for-profit or nonprofits. He shared that some folks were already doing good work and the City would absolutely continue that engagement.

### **III. A Chance to Shine**

City Manager Archer indicated the "A Chance to Shine Program" was an employment and skills training initiative, launched by the Department of Human Services during FY 2025, supports individuals experiencing homelessness by providing career opportunities that foster self-sufficiency while addressing hard-to-fill positions in City departments. The program leverages a collaborative, cross-departmental approach to create impactful outcomes for homeless individuals in the community. He introduced Ms. Kimberly Thomas, Director, Department of Human Services, to provide an overview of the program and share outcomes from the first cohort of participants.

Ms. Thomas was excited to shared information about the first inaugural cohort of the A Chance to Shine Pilot as follows:

- A 10-week employment training program for patrons at the Four Oaks Day Services and Training Center
- In FY 2025, \$300,000 in local funds were allocated to support the pilot program
  - Transportation
  - Uniforms, protective gear
  - Provide lunch for the participants

- Participants earn \$15 per hour for up to 30 hours per week of training which included placement within a City department learning entry level tasks
- Participation in certain enrichment programs also equate to paid training (soundness of mind and body, financial literacy, and good neighbor)
- Participants are paid every two weeks on the City's employee payment cycle

Ms. Thomas indicated that the Pilot Cohort Experience: A Shared Network and shared the following:

- Patrons of Four Oaks Day Service Center completed applications via an online portal developed in partnership with the City departments of Human Resources and Information Technology. The City's Finance department made it possible for training stipends to be paid via reloadable debit cards, rather than customary direct deposit especially helpful for patrons who were unbanked.
- Eight (8) participants were interviewed and selected for the pilot cohort with a 100% success rate
  - Five (5) participants were placed with the Department of **Public Works**, and three (3) with the **Sheriff's Department**.
- Participants completed city contractor onboarding, as well as an orientation process specific to ACTS.
- Department of **Human Services** provided resources and support over the course of the 10 weeks.

Ms. Thomas shared the timeline for next Cohort as follows:

- November 2024: Application and selection process
- December 2, 2024: Onboarding and department orientation
- December 9, 2024: Site placement at **Newport News Waterworks** as Water Distribution Specialist trainees and would accept all ten (10) participants
- February 21, 2025: Program Completion

Councilman Long thanked all for creation of the A Chance to Shine program. He believed it was something the City really needed. He questioned with the eight participants were they now placed in employment in the City or was that coming down the road. Ms. Thomas replied that four individuals were successful with placed in the City; however, Human Services were still working with the other participants on overcoming some barriers. She indicated the barriers in some cases were limits to their ability to still show up to work timely, so Human Services were working through some of the nuances of support services but do anticipate that all participants would be placed or eligible for placement in a City Department.

Councilman Harris indicated that the Departments of Public Work, Waterworks, and Sheriff's office were participating and questioned whether there any other potential departments. Ms. Thomas replied all department were potential departments. She shared that Human Services had extended, but was attempting to work by cohort because we understand the importance of camaraderie and creating a network where there was a support system. She indicated that the first cohort that Human Service was not able to get everybody in one department and with the second cohort Waterworks agreed to taking all ten participants. Ms. Thomas advised that the initial initiation was to go out to every department in the City that had vacancies and could use entry-level training program trainees who could actually benefit from them being in their facilities or departments.

Councilman Harris questioned whether Human Services happen to find somebody who had a unique skill set, whether it was clerical or what have you that just happened to fall into this category would that individual be able to skip an entry level job. Ms. Thomas replied yes and shared a success story of a gentleman who actually went to work for the Sheriff's work detail,

and it was really just doing some maintenance and landscaping. However, upon entry on his first day, but the Sheriff's office discovered that he was former military, and he had a significant role in missions in Afghanistan and he was pulled in on his first day to work inside of the facility. So yes, that does happen and wanted to speak to the skills of the participant.

Councilwoman Vick thanked Human Services for the A Chance to Shine, the report was music to her ears. She indicated that initially when the Four Oaks Day Service Center was implemented. She shared one of her biggest concerns with the Four Oaks Day Service Center was not allow the homeless people to just come in and sit, that there needed to be some requirements for connectivity to work, job training, and education. She was overjoyed the A Chance to Shine program was created and was successful.

#### **IV. Comments/Ideas/Suggestions**

##### National League of Cities (NLC)

City Manager Archer believed that NLC was an opportunity for elected officials to learn more about data collection and how that data was used for comprehensive policy analysis. He advised he took the opportunity to attend several sessions that allowed him to listen to the insights of Councilmembers from other communities to understand their framework and the need for accurate data to make better policy decisions. He indicated that listening and participating in those sessions was very helpful. He shared another informative session was one that involved learning how to build stronger bonds between universities and community leaders. The City had a wonderful institution Christopher Newport University (CNU) in our own community. He indicated that CNU had been very open and welcoming and working with the City. He advised that the City was also bounded by two other universities which included Hampton University and the College of William Mary. The NLC was focused on that type of engagement so that communities could learn from others about what these partnerships should look like and how to bring them to one's City or County. City Manager Archer shared one thing that was very helpful for him was a session on really taking advantage of NLCS technical assistance program, and in this case, offered technical assistance to localities to help one rethink strategies to engage disconnected youth and what NLC referred to as an opportunity for youth. He shared it was always a pleasure to enjoy the City's youth delegation, to see them in action, to see them interacting with other youth and to see them learning about the sense of importance that comes with engaging and learning about democratic practices. He advised he thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to attend the NLC City Summit.

Vice Mayor Bethany shared that the NLC City Summit was an awesome opportunity to learn best practices from all over the country. He indicated he spent a lot of time with representatives from Tacoma, Washington, which was not much bigger than Newport News. He advised that he was on the Finance Committee for NLC in which the Chair of that Committee was the Council President from Cleveland, Ohio and ironically this time around going to NLC when I mentioned Newport News many knew about Newport News. He indicated numerous people had said they were familiar with the City, and the Council's President stated that his wife was from the area. He shared that one thing that really stuck out was the understanding of crypto particularly with new administration coming into the White House has been in favor of crypto and what that might look like for municipalities. He shared that some of the localities that attended the meeting, had residents who were already paying taxes with crypto. He did not believe crypto was going anywhere and thought the City should be proactive - what could the City look at potentially if that arises. Learning that was fascinating and again, how could the City be proactive. Regarding the downtown revitalization of Tampa, he shared that area was very similar to what downtown Newport News looked like, within the past decade there had been much transformation. He believed

Newport News could learn and benefit from what was done in Tampa with all of the private investment and benefit from that. He indicated that the Mayor of Tampa was a fan of Newport News and believed Newport News could engage with them. He shared that sports tourism was a big conversation as City Council had the opportunity to go to Rocky Mount, North Carolina to learn more about what that event center could do. Sports tourism was not going anywhere, as it was a billion plus dollar industry. The City was moving forward with a feasibility study regarding what opportunities were before the City.

Councilman Long shared the sessions he enjoyed were Artificial Intelligence (AI) related. He indicated AI was not meant to replace employees but was meant to create a more efficient and more productive employee. He advised that he and Vice Mayor Bethany attended a session together that was focused on how data was more predictable about the future, more than common sense or logic. The City should look at utilizing AI to determine things like crime statistics or enforcing code in the City, rather than thinking about data as a sort of granular, but looking at how to take that information and actually produce a safer City. He advised that he brought back information on AI and some of the technical assistance that was provided for NLC participants. He hoped the City could push toward AI in the future. He mentioned that there was a supercomputer located in Newport News at Jefferson Lab, and he believe the City was going to advance marine technology. If the City was going to be a city that was focused on technology, it should be a city to lead the way with AI. He indicated that cities were not taking advantage of AI yet, but believed the City needed to take a more proactive approach implementing the strategies into the workforce.

Councilman Eley shared he had an opportunity to talk with some of the people from Tampa regarding how they redeveloped their waterfront and downtown area. He indicated one thing he was amazed by was Sparkman's Wharf, and how they had the different containers there which was something the City had discussed previously, and how that could be brought to other parts of the City. Also discussed was workforce development and how that could change careers and lives of the underserved community. He stated it was a good conference. He appreciated being able to fellowship and talk with people from other states and cities. He discovered other localities shared some of the challenges that Newport News had, and he was interested in how they were being addressed. Councilman Eley recalled discussions with North Carolina representatives where they were experiencing a rise in car theft and that locality provided air tags to citizens to be placed in the trunk to track and locate the vehicles. He indicated Newport News did not have that particular problem, but it was good to learn there were solutions to challenges. He advised it was a good conference.

Councilwoman Vick indicated she was always trying to think of how to bring vibrancy to the City's waterways; her most exciting day was participating in a boat tour. She learned the Tampa Bay Waterways was partnered with the Port and was a team. The Port allowed the tour, and she learned that boat tours were contracted out to other companies. Councilwoman Vick asked City Manager Archer to elaborate on the session regarding drones.

City Manager Archer indicated that Tampa, along with numerous Federal Partners, led a panel conversation about how to begin conversations with communities regarding air mobility, as the City was considering the potential of future operations at the airport. He shared that Tampa through their airport was already thinking about the benefit of air taxis to their tourism base, and were approaching the discussion around air taxis and the use of drones in a very logical and methodical way. He indicated the difficult things were required and could not be done without collaboration with Federal Partners. It was a high-level conversation, and his takeaway was that this was the beginning, and the encouragement provided was to get started with the conversation and ensure Federal Partners were at the table.

#### City Council Subcommittees



Mayor Jones advised following Council Committees discussions the recommendation was three Committees. He indicated that Council would vote on the resolution at the December 10, 2025 Regular City Council meeting. He recognized Councilman-Elect Robert Coleman and indicated he looked forward to working with him beginning January 2025. He advised that during the Organizational meeting discussion on January 14, 2025, Councilmembers would be assigned to the different committees. The structure of the three committees were Finance and Government Performance; Public Safety; and Neighborhood, Recreation and Parks. Those three committees would have a Chair and Vice Chair to be divided by the six Councilmembers. He shared three committees with two Councilmembers per committee and one Assistant City Manager as a point of contact, to assist with documentation and minutes. Mayor Jones advised that an appropriate day, time, and location would be established as the meeting would be televised. He advised that further discussions would be had during the organizational meeting, and the City Council Budget Retreat.

Councilman Long shared that he had an opportunity to tour Riverview Farm Park with Mr. Michael Poplawski, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, and learned that Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) laydown areas would be cleared by 2026. He believed it was an opportunity for the City to begin thinking about how to develop the park into something that citizens were actually looking forward to. He recalled that at one time the City had a master plan which was created in the 1990s with another plan created later around the HRSD Trail. He believed the City Council needed to discuss this again and come up with ideas. It was approximately a 10-acre parcel that was utilized as a laydown area that was undeveloped and did not have anything designated towards it, but he believed the City needed to revisit and begin discussions about how to take utilize citizen input and how the City wanted to develop the park. He indicated there needed to be a plan in place by 2026 once HRSD completed its SWIFT project.

Councilwoman Woodbury indicated that HRSD made the plan which included restrooms and offices along the trail. She suggested looking at the plan already in place.

Councilman Long advised that in the center of the park there were approximately 10 acres HRSD used for laydown areas. The HRSD trail had been created and that was what he had the opportunity to tour. He shared there was a lot of open space that had not been planned. He felt the City needed to start looking at what to have in the open space and how the park was going to look after HRSD completed its project.

Vice Mayor Bethany indicated it had been approximately one year since an update on the Grissom Library. He requested an update on the design for the library.

Vice Mayor Bethany shared that he and Councilman Harris had an opportunity to tour Skiffe's Creek and requested an update. He indicated while touring at the intersection of Industrial Park Drive and Warwick Boulevard there was a development that had been sitting there for a long time called Sarah Oaks. He requested an update on that development.

Mayor Jones reminded that City staff discussed the grant(s) applied for, and particularly with a new administration coming. The City did not want that money to sit there and then January 20<sup>th</sup> comes, and that money disappears. He indicated that \$20 million could change downtown, especially when it came to coal mitigation. He requested that staff keep him updated.

Mayor Jones advised that a new FOIA Officer would be hired in the future. City Attorney Pealo replied that the position had been advertised and hoped to begin interviews in January 2025. He indicated the goal with the FOIA Officer was like the one-stop shop rather than punitive where someone sent an email and people scramble, it would all be public record and

accessible on the website, there would be a structured process, and Council would have more of that discussion at the organizational meeting.

Mayor Jones advised that he would be making rounds on Capitol Hill in mid-January. He realized there was a lot of new transition. The goal was to meet the new people i.e. the Mayor's Representatives or new cabinet members; if Councilmembers had anything they wished to share/request let him know.

Regarding Vice Mayor Bethany's comments, Mayor Jones advised that discussions were still needed for all big projects. He shared there were 8 to 10 big projects that had not been completed due to either lack of capital, lack of political will, etc. He indicated the City needed to build a road map. He requested City Manager Archer, Ms. Florence Kingston, Director, Department of Development, and himself sit down in December to go over everything and present information and update Council at the January meeting.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired about the Charter Review Committee and when that was set to be completed. Vice Mayor Bethany replied the goal of the Charter Review Committee was to have recommendations/report before Council by June 2025.

## V. Closed Meeting

(6:05 p.m. – 6:35 p.m.)

## VI. Adjourn

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS  
ON MOTION, COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 6:35 P.M.

Zina F. Middleton, MMC  
Chief Deputy City Clerk

Phillip Jones  
Mayor  
Presiding Officer

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk

**MINUTES OF CLOSED SESSION**  
**OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL**  
**CITY HALL 10TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**2400 WASHINGTON AVE**  
**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2024, 6:05 P.M.**



### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tina L. Vick; Dr. Patricia P. Woodbury; Curtis D. Bethany III; John R. Eley, III; Marcellus L. Harris III, D. Div.; Phillip Jones; and Cleon M. Long, P.E.

### MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

### OTHERS PRESENT:

Alan K. Archer; Robert Pealo; Mabel Washington Jenkins; Darlene Bradberry; Eoghan "Owen" Miller; David Freeman; Florence Kingston; Kim Bracy; Ginger Blount-Moore; Rob Coleman; Tiffany Conatser; and Zina Middleton; Ralph (Bo) Clayton

After ascertaining that proper meeting notice had been provided to each member of City Council, Mayor Jones called the meeting to order and stated the meeting was being held for the following

purposes:

- (11). To call a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, subsections: (5) a discussion concerning 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 the community, the subject of which is a potential expansion of an existing business in the southern section of the City; and (7) consultation with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body, the subject of which is actual and threatened litigation involving tort claims against the City.

Councilman Long moved for a closed meeting under sections and reasons cited above; seconded by Councilwoman Vick.

Vote on Roll Call:

Ayes: Vick, Woodbury, Bethany, Eley, Harris, Jones, Long

Nays: None

Absent During Vote: None

After reconvening in open session, Councilwoman Woodbury moved to certify that to the best of each member's knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting by the Council. Motion seconded by Vice Mayor Bethany.

Vote on Roll Call:

Ayes: Vick, Woodbury, Bethany, Eley, Harris, Jones, Long

Nays: None

Absent During Vote: None

(Closed Session 6:05 p.m. – 6:35 p.m.)

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS,  
ON MOTION, COUNCIL ADJOURNED AT 6:35 P.M.

Mabel Washington Jenkins, MMC  
City Clerk

Phillip Jones  
Mayor  
Presiding Officer

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk

### **CERTIFICATE OF SPECIAL MEETING**

**MEETING DATE:** November 26, 2024

**MOTION:** Dr. Patricia Woodbury  
**SECOND:** Vice Mayor Curtis Bethany

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Newport News has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote as required under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712.D of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, requires a certification by this City Council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Newport News does hereby certify that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the City Council.

**VOTE**

AYES: Vick, Woodbury, Bethany, Eley, Harris, Jones, Long

NAYS: None

ABSTENTION: None

ABSENT DURING VOTE: None

ABSENT DURING MEETING: None

ATTEST:

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Mabel Washington Jenkins, MMC  
City Clerk