

**HIGH POINT CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 26, 2021 – 3:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MINUTES

As part of the City of High Point's on-going COVID-19 mitigation efforts, in-person attendance was not allowed at this meeting. Instead, the meeting was live-streamed and the public was provided a link to listen to the meeting as it was being live-streamed. www.HighPointNC.gov/VirtualPublicMeeting

CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

He then called the roll for attendance. The following council members were **present (8)**:

Mayor Jay W. Wagner (physically present)
Council Member Tyrone Johnson- At Large (remote participation)
Council Member Cyril Jefferson- Ward 1 (physically present)
Council Member Christopher Williams- Ward 2 (remote participation)
Council Member Monica L. Peters- Ward 3 (physically present) [joined at 3:33 p.m.]
Council Member S. Wesley Hudson- Ward 4 (physically present)
Council Member Victor Jones- Ward 5 (physically present)
Council Member Michael Holmes- Ward 6 (remote participation)

The following council members were absent (1):

Mayor Pro Tem Britt W. Moore- At Large

The following staff members were physically present:

Randy McCaslin, Interim City Manager; Greg Ferguson, Assistant City Manager; Eric Olmedo, Assistant City Manager; Jeron Hollis, Managing Director; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Meghan Maguire, Assistant City Attorney; Jelani Biggs, Diversity and Inclusion Officer; Bobby Fitzjohn, Financial Services Director; Mary S. Brooks, Deputy City Clerk; and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

Others present:

Joe Crim, Legal Extern-City Attorney's Office

PRESENTATION OF ITEMS

Closed Session (Attorney-Client Privilege)

Council is requested to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a) (3) to preserve the attorney-client privilege.

A motion was made by Council Member Hudson at 3:05 p.m., seconded by Council Member Johnson, to go into closed session pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(4) for attorney-client privilege. Following a roll call vote by the Mayor, the motion to go into closed session carried by the following unanimous 7-0 vote.

Aye (7): Mayor Wagner, Council Member Johnson, Council Member Hudson, Council Member Jones, Council Member Holmes Council Member Jefferson, and Council Member Williams

Absent (2): Mayor Pro Tem Moore, and Council Member Peters

Upon reconvening into Open Session at 3:30 p.m., Mayor Wagner announced there would be no action taken as a result of the closed session.

2021-222 Discussion- Proposed FY 2021-22 City of High Point Annual Budget

Council and Staff will further deliberate on the Proposed FY 2021-22 City of

Eric Olmedo, Assistant City Manager spoke to the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program; said he had discussions with a consultant at Griffin & Strong, P.C. on partnering with Guilford County in a Disparity Study (Study); said that the cost for the Study would be \$300,000; the city would save around \$50,000 to \$60,000 if partnered with the County; spoke to other options on soliciting RFPs with other agencies.

Mr. Olmedo provided a handout that had information on the Fair Housing Program staffing and expenses for the City of Greensboro, City of Durham, and City of Winston-Salem; average annual cost for the position was between \$60,000 to \$75,000 with a \$12,000 to \$15,000 cost annually for training and supplies with a total of between \$80,000 to \$90,000 annually. The legal cost for internal staff would depend on how robust the housing cases would be; spoke to potential reimbursement funds from HUD.

Mr. Olmedo continued discussion regarding addressing the strategic targeting neighborhoods initiative; said council would decide what the program would be; said that the American Rescue Funds would be used for the initiative; and voiced concern of funding programs once the funds were exhausted.

Mayor Wagener inquired if the American rescue Plan funds needed to be allocated by the end of 2024. Mr. Olmedo replied that the funds would need to be under contract by the year 2024.

Mr. Olmedo continued discussion regarding a concern/issue on expanding Wi-Fi and Broad Band access to the communities that did not have those services; spoke to discussions on initiatives with the High Point School Partnership, and Charter Communications with Spectrum; spoke to barriers (cost, affordability etc...); to the FCC program Extending Broad Band benefits program (EBB) that provided vouchers for qualified households at a discount rate; and to using the American Rescue Funds to bridge the gap for funding Wi-Fi services.

Council Member Holmes spoke to working with Dr. Sharon L. Contreras, Superintendent-Guilford County Schools; said she provided heat maps for the families without coverage; and inquired if there had been any changes. Mr. Olmedo replied that the schools provided information on the families who needed access to Wi-Fi services; Charter Communication and North State maps were confidential; spoke to getting private companies to provide services and coverage; and elaborated on the access barriers for families in terms of coverage and cost factors.

Council Member Hudson requested staff to provide updates in regard to the High Point School Partnership's progress. Mr. Olmedo replied that staff would assure updates are provided.

Mayor Wagner inquired on the budget for the Targeted Neighborhoods Initiative projects. Mr. Olmedo replied that staff would come back with a recommendation once guidelines were received from the government.

Mr. Olmedo reported that the solid waste funds had positive operations; the composing facilities ran as surplus that funded their capital projects; provided comparison rates for Duke Energy versus the City's Electric rates; with the city's proposed 10% decrease, and Duke Energy's 5.5% decrease that the city would be over Duke Energy's rates.

Council Member Hudson asked if collection fees, and land field fees were separate. Mr. Olmedo replied yes, and that they both ran surplus annually to subsidize each other.

Mayor Wagener asked if there were any proposals or discussion for the transit budget. Hearing none, Mayor Wagner moved to the next item regarding mental health with the High Point Police Department (HPPD); and opened the floor up for discussion.

Council Member Williams spoke to having discussions with police officers regarding funding to support the mental health professional assistance program as it was done in the city of Durham; and that they were still discussing the next steps that could be taken.

Mayor Wagner inquired if they were in a position to request funding. Council Member Williams replied, no.

Discussion took place regarding different programs for mental health professionals

assistance, comparisons with other cities, and funding.

Council Member Jones advised that further discussion on this matter could be placed on the Public Safety Committee's agenda.

Mayor Wagner opened the floor up for discussion on the next item, MWBE Specialist position.

Council Member Williams inquired if requested position was already in the budget. Mr. Olmedo replied yes.

Council Member Holmes inquired on the roles of the DEI Specialist position; and on recommendations that staff made for the MWBE Specialist position. Mr. Olmedo replied that the DEI Specialist position was not intended to support the MWBE; and in regards to the MWBE position, staff was requested to bring back information after discussions with the Community Development department on updated MWBE statistics, and on a potential Disparity Study.

Council Member Holmes asked if there were any discussion with the Community Development department regarding the disparity in the disbursement of federal funding for MWBEs. Mr. Olmedo replied that the city did not have control over how the distribution of federal funds were distributed.

Council Member Holmes inquired on funds distributed on a local level. Mr. Olmedo replied that he was not aware of that funding; and that the majority of the funding went through the Community Development department; said that discussion with the Community Development department was regarding construction projects that were tracked for MWBE statistics.

Council Member Holmes inquired on the benefits of having a position dedicated to managing MWBE issues; and if federal funds could be used to cover the expansion of the MWBE position in the budget. Mr. Olmedo replied that from a staff's perspective the position would allow more outreaching to MWBE firms, but was not a recommendation at this point; said that would be a decision made by council; and that he did not have an answer at this time on using federal funding for the MWBE position.

Council Member asked Williams if Guilford County started their Disparity Study (Study). Mr. Olmedo replied that the County started their Study in March with Griffin & Strong, PC; said that it would be a yearlong process; and that the city could join with a saving starting at \$50,000 with a projected cost of \$300,000.

Mayor Wagner reminded council that this funding would not be recurring.

Mayor Wagner stated that the next topic for discussion would be on the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) position.

Council Member Johnson inquired if the total cost annually for the position was \$90,000; and said that this position would be a good investment for the city. Mr. Olmedo replied yes; and that the total amount included benefits, supplies, and annual training.

Mayor Wagner inquired on the number of cases that were referred, how many of those investigations found insufficient evidence to bring a case to trial. Jelani Biggs, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer replied that staff would follow up with that information; and that the city served the capacity as a referral; and that the state tracked the national trends.

Mayor Wagner spoke to having more time for further discussion before approving funding for this position; spoke to doing a budget amendment if needed; to having feedback from the community, and stakeholders; and spoke to the impact on cost of hiring defense attorneys for those who have rental properties.

Jeron Hollis, Managing Director spoke to reaching out to stakeholders; and having further discussion at a later date.

Council Member Hudson voiced concern for taxpayers paying for a service already provided by the state.

Council Member Johnson stated that the issues that citizens faced was access and availability of those services that Raleigh provided; spoke to looking at the needs from both sides (renters/landlords); and to having further discussion once stakeholders were involved.

Mayor Wagner inquired on the location for fair housing cases that make it to court. Mr. Biggs replied that the case would be heard at federal court located in Greensboro.

Mayor Wagner opened the floor for discussion on the Targeted Neighborhood Initiative, Wi-Fi funding, solid waste funds, and the electric rate comparison. Seeing non, the Mayor recognized Council Member Peters discussion on Southwest renewals proposal.

Council Member Peters stated that Southwest Renewal Foundation was not considered a non profit organization because it was involved in community development and not immediate relief circumstances which would make it considered to be a non-profit agency.

Council Member Peters made a motion; seconded by Council Member Johnson to add a line item in the budget in the amount of \$50,000 annually for the Southwest Renewal Foundation.

Mayor Wagner opened floor up for discussion.

Council Member Jones inquired on where the funds would come from. Mr. Olmedo replied that staff would have to come back to council with a recommendation.

Mayor Wagner asked what the purpose for the funding. Council Member Peters replied that the funding would be used for grant writing, easement acquisitions, planning; and that the funding could be allocated from the Transportation, Parks & Recreation, and Community Development departments.

Council Member Jones inquired on the difference between nonprofit allocations versus requesting a line item budget with the city. Council Member Peters replied and spoke to specific projects that would be completed by the Foundation; as well as the Foundation contribution to economic growth in the southwest corridor.

Joanne Carlyle, City Attorney advised that a written agreement would be necessary to identify the public purpose that it served.

Council Member Peters asked if an agreement could be made after the request was added to the budget. Ms. Carlyle replied and advised that a written agreement would be needed to define the purpose of the funding; spoke to the obligation as a city to show purpose of funding that is allowed; and stated that generally the foundation would present to council explaining the use of the funding then enter into a written agreement.

Ms. Carlyle asked if the Foundation's grant writing would be completed on behalf of the city. Council Member Peters replied yes.

Greg Ferguson, Assistant City Manager stated that most grants submitted by the city must be originated from the city as well; and said that the written agreement should also read that the Southwest Renewal Foundation would work as partners with the city in a collaborative manner.

Mayor Wagner asked if council could vote to create an allocation on the condition upon approval of the written agreement, then come back at a later date for final approval. Ms. Carlyle replied yes.

Council Member Holmes asked for a detailed financial accounting of funds spent provided from the Foundation upon approval. Council Member Peters replied that the information would be provided.

Mayor Wagner advised that council could seek amendments to the written agreement until it's satisfactory.

Council Member Jones asked if the foundation would still want their request for \$25,000 in the nonprofit allocations with the Finance Committee. Council Member Peters replied yes.

Council Member Hudson said that the city had departments that were already doing what nonprofit agencies were doing; and did not see how it benefited the city; to the stipulation agreement for nonprofit allocations that required agencies to provide details on their projects; stated that the Southwest Renewal Foundation had yet to present their project, to develop an website application, from funding they received in 2019; voiced concerns on allocating funds for the Foundation before seeing their previous project presentation.

Council Member Jones asked was the website application created. Council Member Peters replied that the Foundation completed a lot of work on the website; and that they would need to be contacted for detailed information.

Discussion took place regarding amending the budget after the written agreement was approved.

A motion was made by Council Member Peters, seconded by Council Member Johnson, that the previous motion be amended, and that \$50,000.00 be allocated in the budget for the Southwestern Renewal Foundation upon approval of a written agreement with the city. Following a roll call vote by Mayor Wagner, the motion carried by the following 6-2 vote:

- Aye (6): Mayor Wagner, Council Member Johnson, Council Member Jefferson, Council Member Williams, Council Member Peters, and Council Member Holmes.
- Nay (2): Council Member Hudson, and Council Member Jones.
- Absent (1): Mayor Pro Tem Moore.

Mr. Olmedo said that the High Point Fire Department managed the fire districts at Deep River, and in Colfax; the tax rate for Deep River which resulted in increased revenue for fire services; Tommy Reid, Fire Chief proposed adding an additional three fire fighter positions that would be paid for by a combination of increased taxes, and decreased overtime; and said that a budget amendment could be made if supported.

Mayor Wagner spoke to the next steps on approving the budget.

It was the consensus of council to allow staff to produce documents for the proposed FY 2021-22 annual budget for adoption; and schedule the next special meeting on Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 4 p.m. to consider adopting the budget; and have the clerk provide a notice to the public for this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being nothing further to discuss, no objections were voiced to adjourn the meeting.
The meeting adjourned at 4:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jay W. Wagner, Mayor

Attest:

Mary S. Brooks, Deputy City Clerk