

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 20, 2025, CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

A SPECIAL meeting of the Hopewell City Council was held on Tuesday, March 20, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

John B. Partin, Mayor
Rita Joyner, Vice Mayor
Michael Harris, Councilor
Ronnie Ellis, Councilor
Susan Daye, Councilor
Yolanda Stokes, Councilor
Dominic Holloway, Councilor

Vice Mayor Joyner made a motion to amend the agenda to remove the current item number 6 and replace it with economic development and parks and recreation as number 7; Mayor Partin seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Yes
Councilor Holloway-	Yes
Vice Mayor Joyner -	Yes

Motion Passes 7-0

Councilor Daye made a motion to allow Councilor Harris to participate remotely; Vice Mayor Joyner seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Councilor Harris-	Abstain
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Yes
Councilor Holloway-	Yes
Vice Mayor Joyner -	Yes

Motion Passes 6-0

1. Wastewater Treatment Facility Operation Status – Michael Crocker, Public Works Director

Mr. Crocker, the Interim Director at the Wastewater Treatment Facility, provided a detailed operational status update. He noted that he has spent two weeks at the facility, immersing himself in the daily operations and observing various issues. He mentioned that there are several key challenges at the facility, particularly in management, staffing, operations, and maintenance. On the management front, he highlighted the inadequacy of the current utility rate structure, which is not sufficient to meet the facility's capital and operational needs. A rate study is underway to address this. Still, future debt service will depend on a rate structure that supports both the facility and its surrounding infrastructure, which is often overlooked. Staffing issues were also a significant concern, with 57 full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) approved, but several vacancies—three in management and five in operations, maintenance, and lab roles. The facility has chronic operator turnover, which causes performance challenges and overtime issues. Training new staff is difficult due to the unique nature of the facility's processes. Mr. Crocker also pointed out longstanding issues with workplace culture, routine and preventative maintenance, and equipment repair and replacement schedules. Funding shortages and inadequate staffing exacerbate these operational challenges. Although the facility is within regulatory compliance limits, the lack of sufficient operations, maintenance, and replacement poses potential future legal and compliance risks. Additionally, pump station overflows continue to be a problem, which may lead to future regulatory challenges. Despite these issues, Mr. Crocker acknowledged the dedication of the core staff at the

facility, noting that their strong work ethic and ownership of their roles inspire him and can help create a positive shift in the culture. In response to questions, Mr. Crocker discussed leadership as a key factor in addressing the staffing turnover and workplace culture. He believes accountability, both to colleagues and the public, has been lacking, which has contributed to the challenges. He emphasized that introducing a culture of accountability—not for blame, but for team improvement—was essential for the facility's success. He recognized that this shift may be difficult for the staff, but it is necessary for moving forward and improving operations.

Vice Mayor Joyner encouraged in regard to the vacancies to get involved with looking at the postings and working with HR. She states that in a lot of cases, the salary numbers are not posted on the postings. She then asks about the DEQ issues. Mr. Crocker responds to that question. He says the team provides inspection oversight on all operating components of the facility. They document any deficiencies and ensure compliance with permits. These inspections may ultimately lead to notices of violation if issues are identified.

Mr. Crocker spoke further about the pump stations. Letting the council know pump station overflows are a common issue in the city, with 19 pump stations in total, 15 or 16 of which are dedicated to domestic services for commercial and residential properties. These stations require significant maintenance, use a lot of energy, and have large replacement cycles. Unfortunately, when overflows occur, wastewater can spill onto the ground, presenting risks to public and environmental health. The overflows tend to happen in the exact locations, which poses ongoing challenges for the plant and its ability to comply with permit requirements.

Councilor Daye asks if there is a type of failure do they have backup equipment or what is needed for maintenance. Mr. Crocker stated, they are not prepared.

Mayor Partin asked did Mr. Crocker have a good sense of where projects stand right now in terms of their design development phase, in their execution phase, and their close-out phase. Mr. Crocker responds that he makes two rounds through the plant each day, inspecting processes from influent to effluent. During these rounds, he consistently identifies areas needing attention or repair. His main focus has been ensuring that operational components are functioning properly while addressing capital projects. Although he's still familiarizing himself with the status of various projects, he highlighted one urgent issue: the roof of the administration building has a significant leak. He has been pushing for the shop drawings for the roof replacement to keep operations running smoothly. Mr. Crocker plans to

dedicate more time to capital projects in the coming weeks, as that is his area of expertise, but staffing and workplace culture have taken priority initially. Mayor Partin then asks for a rundown list of the projects currently being executed, if they are out for bid right now or not. Specifically, he asks about the Queen Anne pump station. The answer given was that it went back to redesign. The mayor then asked about the sewer collection system and the overflows and collapsing lines, and manholes. Mayor Partin says in this budget cycle they need to focus on public safety, but they also need to focus on the wastewater plant and the infrastructure as their big second priority. Councilor Holloway mentions that the violations need to be public for everyone to know. He also says the violations are something they should be obligated to share with the citizens.

Mr. Crocker gives the violations as follows: During the inspection, several issues with equipment, unit processes, and design deviations were identified, many of which had already been flagged during the FY 23 compliance evaluation. Notably, the segregated preliminary treatment traveling screens, one of three, were out of service, and one of the two GR classifier systems was also nonfunctional. Additionally, four of six flight and rail systems in the primary clarifiers were inoperable, and one of the three primary clarifiers was entirely out of service. Vegetative growth was observed on the scum layer of two of the three clarifiers, and the MBBR units showed media rafting and plant growth in the anoxic zones, with mixers in all units not in use. Other issues included floating solids in the chlorine contact tank, affecting about a quarter of the length of each unit, and the sodium hypochlorite automated monitoring and dosing system being out of service. In the industrial preliminary treatment area, two of the traveling screens were out of service, and all three bucket auger systems for grit removal were nonoperational. Six of the eight flight and rail systems in the primary clarifiers were inoperable, and several secondary clarifiers had malfunctioning flight and rail systems, with observed conditions indicating failure. The UNAC system's diaphragm pump on train one was also out of service, and one of the two gravity thickeners was nonfunctional, showing vegetative growth on the solid surfaces. The centrifuges, which are used for sludge processing, had two out of three units out of service, and two of the three incinerator feed pumps were also nonoperational. The staff noted that the furnace had been out of service for much of 2024 but was operational during the inspection. Furthermore, the facility lacked documentation for a preventive maintenance program, with repairs being conducted reactively instead of proactively. The observed maintenance schedule in the operations manual was outdated, with actions listed from 2004 to 2008, and staff confirmed that it was not being followed. There were also no records to verify that the alarms were tested for proper functioning. Finally, a drain and

sump in the sodium hypochlorite storage secondary containment area were observed, but the operator could not identify where it discharged or whether it was controlled by a valve.

Councilor Stokes asked that when he gets everything updated, can he shoot her an email so she can come and look at the facility. He states there is a long way to go to getting it updated.

At this time, Mayor Partin asks that the city attorney read out the closed language to go into closed session.

CLOSED MEETING

Councilor Daye made a motion to go into a closed meeting under Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 A1 and 8 to consult with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters and to discuss and consider personnel matters. This is relative to the Hopewell Water Renewal; Vice Mayor Joyner seconds the motion.

Councilor Holloway asked if there was anything that could be discussed in closed session tonight? Mayor Partin answers that they are seeking guidance on the legal side.

ROLL CALL

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Yes
Councilor Holloway-	Yes
Vice Mayor Joyner -	Yes

Motion Passes 7-0

Councilor Holloway made a motion to come out of closed session; Mayor Partin seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Yes
Councilor Holloway-	Yes
Vice Mayor Joyner -	Yes

Motion Passes 7-0

CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE § 2.2-3712 (D): Were only public business matters (1) lawfully exempted from open-meeting requirements and (2) identified in the closed-meeting motion discussed in the closed meeting?

ROLL CALL

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Yes
Councilor Holloway-	Yes
Vice Mayor Joyner -	Yes

Motion Passes 7-0**BUDGET PRESENTATIONS****1. City Attorney Budget – Anthony Bessette**

Mr. Bessette presented a request to the council for approval to hire a second Assistant City Attorney. He highlighted the significant costs the city has been incurring on outside legal counsel, citing that in the fiscal year 2023, the city

spent approximately \$256,000, and in the fiscal year 2024, it was around \$246,000. For the current fiscal year, the city is on track to spend around \$260,000 on outside legal fees. Given that the city's budget for outside counsel in previous years has been set at \$80,000, Mr. Bessette emphasized that they are consistently exceeding this amount. He proposed offering the new position at a salary of up to \$115,000, believing that this amount would attract qualified candidates who could help mitigate some of the reliance on outside counsel. He further explained that his office, currently a one-person operation, faces bandwidth issues and cannot adequately address all the legal needs of the city's departments. For example, many departments, including the Department of Social Services, operate without dedicated legal counsel. Mr. Bessette emphasized that by hiring an additional attorney, they could not only handle the workload more effectively but potentially save money by reducing the need for outside counsel. While he could not provide an exact savings figure at this time, he was confident that hiring an Assistant City Attorney would be a more cost-effective solution in the long term. Some council members expressed support for the proposal, citing the potential for saving money and improving workflow. However, there was also concern raised about additional costs, particularly given that other departments already budget for their own legal counsel. One council member suggested that a report from each department regarding their legal expenses should be considered before moving forward with the request. Mr. Bessette clarified that the figures presented regarding outside legal counsel fees include not only those billed through the City Attorney's office but also fees paid by other departments, such as Human Resources and Economic Development. He emphasized that the request for an additional attorney does not mean the city would completely eliminate the use of outside counsel. Certain legal matters, like real estate closings, are typically outsourced in every city and county. The goal of hiring an Assistant City Attorney is to reduce the reliance on outside counsel, ultimately making the position cost-effective and potentially self-sustaining by lowering external legal expenses.

2. City Council Budget – Dr. Manker

Dr. Manker discussed the travel budget for city council members, noting that the council directed the City Manager to bring back a proposed budget at the last meeting. The travel sheet presented highlights the three primary organizations that most council members attend, with the possibility of adding the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) conference, which is typically attended by the City Manager but is open to council

members as well. The travel costs listed are estimates, excluding food and other expenses, and range between \$2,860 and \$2,800 on average. The finance department and Dr. Manker proposed a \$4,000 travel allowance per council member, which would save \$6,500 per individual and ultimately result in an overall savings of \$45,000. The mayor mentions he would have liked to see it lower but agrees with the majority.

3. Planning and Development – Mr. Ward

Mr. Ward provided an update on the Planning Department's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the upcoming fiscal year. He clarified that the department's operational budget would remain flat, with no requested increases. Instead, he focused on presenting the department's CIP, which includes 10 planned projects over the next five to six years, with a timeline provided for each. These plans are not traditional capital improvement projects but rather are aimed at addressing various urban planning initiatives. The first project is the citywide implementation of a comprehensive wayfinding program, estimated to cost \$300,000. The second project involves developing downtown design guidelines, for which the department is requesting \$15,000 in matching funds for a grant. The third project is maintenance for the urban tree canopy, requiring \$20,000 to ensure continued care for trees along Route 10 after the expiration of an EPA grant. The fourth project, a small area plan for the Route 36 corridor, requires a \$10,000 city match for a grant. A time-sensitive project is the update to the city's comprehensive plan, expected to cost \$150,000 if it requires a complete rewrite, starting in 2027 for adoption by 2028. Other initiatives include addressing safety concerns in downtown through a crime prevention plan, completing improvements on the 200 block of East White Person Street with \$15,000 for engineering and design, and developing a gateway façade design plan. Dr. Manker also suggested creating a housing plan and updating the existing downtown plan, which is nearly 20 years old. The time-sensitive projects include the comprehensive plan update starting in 2027, Phase 2 of downtown design guidelines for the next fiscal year, and tree canopy maintenance in the 2026 budget. While the Planning Commission is not submitting its own CIP this year, they have endorsed the department's proposals.

The council asked Mr. Ward questions in regard to his presentation, where he responded to each of them in detail.

4. Information Technology Budget – Jay Rezin

Mr. Rezin provided an update on the IT department's budget and capital project requests for the upcoming fiscal year. He reported that the department's operating budget has increased by approximately \$77,000, primarily due to rising technology costs and the continued support for various software systems. Notably, the cost of Tyler Technology software, including Muni and Encode, continues to rise, and the department plans to migrate Tyler to the cloud within the next year or two. Additionally, the acquisition of VMware by Broadcom has nearly doubled the cost of the software supporting the city's servers. To maintain the system, the department has also upgraded its Barracuda backup servers, which support email and user data backups. Mr. Rezin also mentioned the ongoing maintenance of the city's camera and microphone systems in various rooms, including courtrooms, as well as the costs associated with implementing two-factor authentication for police officers and dispatchers, which will eventually extend to all city employees. This initiative is a state mandate and comes with additional costs for security tokens or phone-based authentication. For capital projects, Mr. Rezin highlighted the long-requested Office 365 upgrade, which has become critical as Microsoft transitions to a subscription-based licensing model. The city is currently running Exchange 2016, with many computers using outdated versions of Windows and Office, and Microsoft will soon cease support for these older systems. To stay current, the IT department is requesting \$124,000 to upgrade the Exchange server and migrate email services to the cloud, ensuring that all Microsoft products are up-to-date and supported. This upgrade is essential as the deadline for support expiration is approaching, and the subscription model mandated by Microsoft will be costly but necessary for continued service. He opens the floor for any questions. There were no questions for Mr. Rezin.

5. Public Works Budget – Michael Crocker

Mr. Crocker provided an update on the Public Works budget and various capital projects. He explained that the Public Works Fund includes several different funds, and the operational budget for next year will see a reduction of about \$6,000, which covers VDOT, city buildings, and court buildings. The Refuse Fund is requesting an increase of \$136,909, mainly due to CPI increases tied to the refuse contract and a rise in the cost of flare maintenance at the landfill. The Cemetery Fund is requesting a \$15,000 increase, which will be used for leveling and resetting headstones in the cemetery, funded by perpetual care funds. The Stormwater Fund has a zero-dollar increase, but there is a placeholder for an additional \$432,000 due to the reduction in the industrial credit, which will be applied to ongoing stormwater projects.

Regarding Public Works operations, Mr. Crocker emphasized the tough working conditions during snow season, which place considerable strain on equipment. He mentioned several equipment replacement requests, including a dump truck for the asphalt crew, a dump truck for the concrete crew, a leaf vacuum truck, and a backhoe for asphalt work. These requests are part of a five-year lease plan. The capital improvement summary includes library roof repairs for \$30,000, streetlight improvements for \$20,000, an ADA master plan for \$50,000, HVAC upgrades for social services for \$50,000, and HVAC replacement for the courthouse for \$130,000, which is crucial given the ongoing HVAC issues at the courthouse. Public Works also requested one additional position to support the increasing demands on the fleet, with a total salary, benefit, and operating cost of \$78,780. Additionally, Mr. Crocker highlighted the engineering and stormwater functions, including ongoing capital projects that require continual funding. He pointed out that many of these projects were initially estimated using data that became outdated quickly due to cost increases post-COVID. Notably, the Heretic Avenue drainage project, which is at 100% design completion, is in need of an additional \$2.3 million to proceed, as the city currently lacks the full funds to complete it. The city is also reevaluating other projects and funding reallocations in light of rising costs.

Councilor Stokes asked if there are plans to talk about one of the biggest problems in the city throughout the city, which is the development of potholes and complaints made by the citizens. Mr. Crocker answers they conduct pothole patching efforts as long as weather permits, and it is built into their budget already.

The capital project status update provided by Mr. Crocker covered several ongoing initiatives. The Berry Street project is currently in the right-of-way phase, while the Mesa Drive Pedestrian Improvements are moving forward with bids for rapid flashing beacons at pedestrian crossings in front of the high school. The bids for this project were expected to come back today, but Mr. Crocker would have further updated the following day. The West Randolph Shared Use Path project is in the utility location phase, with 30% of the conceptual design completed, and they are progressing toward a more detailed design. The Courthouse Road Pedestrian Improvements design is also underway.

For other projects, Mr. Crocker highlighted several that are recommended for deferral due to outdated cost estimates, including the Hill and Hooker Street

Reconstruction and Wagner Avenue and Hooker Street Reconstruction. These projects will be revisited by the council next week. The costs for two pavement rehabilitation projects have escalated significantly, with asphalt prices increasing from \$80 per ton to \$140 per ton, a 75% rise. As a result, Richmond and Petersburg Street projects are recommended for deferral due to scheduling and cost concerns, with an expected \$1.8 million allocation required next year for these projects. Mr. Crocker emphasized the importance of developing a ranking plan to prioritize these projects as they compete with other paving efforts. Regarding stormwater projects, the Hank's Pond Stormwater project is under review by a consultant to ensure its effectiveness for the community. The Heretic Avenue Drainage Project has completed its design and requires budget allocation to proceed to bidding. Additionally, the Wagner Road Storm Lining Project is part of efforts to evaluate which stormwater pipes should be relined versus replaced, aiming for cost-effective solutions. The Riverside Avenue Rehab project has completed its engineering assessment, and Mr. Crocker will bring the recommendations back to the council. The Pavement Preservation Plan allocates \$466,000 annually, though Mr. Crocker suggested that a condition assessment of all streets would better guide the allocation of these funds. The Courthouse Parking Lot Repaving project currently lacks funding, though it is acknowledged as a necessary project. Lastly, the Cattail Creek Drainage Crossing project has been assigned to one of the city's on-call consultants.

Mayor Partin asked about the refuse fund budget summary; is it coming out of the enterprise fund or general revenue? Mr. Crocker answers that it comes from the refuse fund. There were more questions and answers between the council and Mr. Crocker.

Vice Mayor Joyner made a motion to extend the meeting until the completion of the Parks and Recreation presentation; Councilor Ellis seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	No
Councilor Holloway-	Yes

Vice Mayor Joyner - Yes

Motion Passes 6-1

6. Economic Development Presentation – Charles Bennett

Mr. Bennett presented a two- to five-year capital budget plan for the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, based on the strategic economic development plan developed with the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the City Council. He emphasized that the plan is a roadmap for the next five years, with no current funding allocated from the general fund or any grant sources. The purpose of this presentation is to lay out the priorities for future budget discussions, particularly for the 2026 budget. Mr. Bennett highlighted that while the projects are not yet funded, they are intended to provide a framework for selecting priorities, with the potential for funding to be allocated in collaboration with the City Manager and Finance. Some projects presented by Mr. Bennett overlap with other departments, such as business corridor developments, where he suggested setting aside approximately \$300,000 over the next five years for developments along corridors like Route 36, 15th Street, and West Broadway. Another notable project mentioned was the creation of a riverfront overlay district master plan, an idea inspired by Paul Reynolds, the former chairperson of the Planning Commission. This initiative would involve collaboration among City Council, the EDA, the Planning Commission, and consultants, with the goal of developing a comprehensive master plan for the riverfront. Additionally, Mr. Bennett touched on plans for mixed-use housing redevelopment aimed at replacing outdated single-family homes with modern housing. He stressed that this process should be thoughtful, with a focus on community involvement. Mr. Bennett also emphasized the importance of the City Point Waterfront development, specifically the acquisition of land for a tall ships dock and visitor center, which he described as a project close to his heart. He expressed a strong desire to secure the waterfront property to begin planning for the development of docks and bring tall ships to the area, envisioning a future where local children could experience the historic significance of the Good Ship Hopewell. Mr. Bennett outlined several significant initiatives for the City of Hopewell's development, with a focus on tourism, infrastructure improvements, and investments in public assets. He began by discussing the

need for a comprehensive \$500,000 investment in uniform signage throughout the city. This initiative aims to ensure that visitors can easily find major attractions, such as the waterfront, the Riverwalk, Weston Manor, and the Arlington Street Corridor, creating a unified and welcoming experience that reinforces the city's identity. Next, he provided an update on the City of Hopewell Marina, where a five-year revitalization plan is underway. A key milestone was reached with the successful issuance of a purchase order for the complete revitalization of the L Dock, which was delivered under budget. Mr. Bennett highlighted the significant progress made, including replacing aging infrastructure and implementing new services like an automated station. Since taking over the marina, over 7,000 visitors have paid ramp fees, generating more than \$23,000 in revenue. He emphasized the importance of continuing investment in this public asset, including the completion of a trailhead to connect the Riverwalk and an additional \$1.5 million in funding to extend the Riverwalk further westward. Mr. Bennett also plans to replace the North Dock's roof with a metal one, create a permanent stage for arts and educational events at the marina, and restore the parking lot. Additionally, he mentioned the need for dredging the creek to remove silt, a process that hasn't been done in about 20 years, which will improve the marina's functionality. These initiatives are part of an ongoing effort to maintain and enhance the marina as a key destination within the city, ensuring it remains a premier part of the Appomattox River Trail. He opens the floor for questions.

7. Parks and Recreation – Tabitha Martinez

During the meeting, Ms. Martinez presented a detailed overview of the department's budget and priorities. She highlighted the importance of the pool as a top priority, requesting an increase in the service contract for lifeguard management services to allow staff to focus on administrative duties. The request also included a personnel addition for consideration. Ms. Martinez discussed a new vehicle lease for the community center, which was necessary after the city took possession of an unused vehicle. She also proposed an increase in conference funds to ensure staff remain certified with up-to-date skills, noting the rising costs of registration and travel for certification programs. Further requests included an increase in funding for park services, specifically for tree maintenance and a lawnmowing contract. Ms. Martinez emphasized the need for a new recreation software system, including a mobile app, to improve registration accessibility. Additionally, there was a request for a new lease or purchase of a bus for the senior transportation program, as the current buses were outdated and frequently in repair. The department also

sought additional funds for park uniforms, temporary help for adult programming, and increased food supply for senior programming. The request included a third-party traffic management company for larger events, as well as funds for vehicle maintenance. Ms. Martinez detailed the capital requests, which included replacing the Hopewell Community Center's security cameras to integrate with the police department's system and updating the HVAC system in the community center. She also outlined planned improvements to the city's parks and the Riverwalk, including design and engineering funds. Lastly, the department requested significant upgrades to the Hopewell Community Center's restrooms and locker rooms, which are in urgent need of modernization and ADA accessibility. The session also touched upon potential support for earmarks to fund the HVAC upgrades, along with the maintenance and improvement projects for Mathis Field and the Riverwalk. Ms. Martinez discussed several budgetary requests and capital improvement projects for the department. She began by addressing the need for park pavilion renovations, particularly focusing on updating the roofing at Crystal Lake, one of the most frequently rented and popular facilities, which has not been updated in 15 to 20 years. This proactive renovation aims to prevent future closures due to roof damage. The presentation also highlighted the need for updates to the Hopewell Community Center Pool, including the installation of ADA accessibility features and depth markers, with a budget request of \$30,000. Additionally, there was a proposal for resurfacing courts and playing surfaces across several parks, including City Point Playground and Riverside, with a focus on the aging tennis courts at Riverside Park. A vendor quote has been obtained for these resurfacing efforts. The total capital request amounted to \$1.4 million, with further explanations provided in the presentation. Regarding personnel, Ms. Martinez requested three new positions. However, one of these positions is contingent upon whether an outside agency is contracted for lifeguard services. Another request was for funding summer staff salaries, which have not been funded by the city in the past but are necessary for running summer camps. Additionally, there is a proposal for an additional recreation maintenance specialist to help manage the increased workload due to the growth of facilities like the River Walk, Atwater Soccer Complex, and Crystal Lake, ensuring that park issues are addressed promptly. The department also proposed several potential fee increases for the upcoming fiscal year. These included a slight increase in membership and rental rates for the community center's meeting rooms, conference rooms, and pool lanes, as well as a small increase in pavilion rental fees. Specifically, the cost of renting small pavilions would increase by \$10, and large pavilion rentals would increase from \$65 to \$75 for residents and from \$150 to \$165 for non-

residents. These fee increases are aimed at generating revenue to maintain and improve city facilities, including future equipment replacements. Ms. Martinez explained that phase two of the project aims to complete the remaining two fields that were not included in the initial phase, focusing on addressing the drainage issues that have been affecting them. The primary objective of this investment is to enhance the fields over the next three years to make them suitable for sports tourism. Currently, the fields are not yet level and safe enough to host tournaments, which is a key goal. Once the fields are properly leveled and improved, the hope is to generate a significant return on investment by bringing in tournaments and attracting consistent visitors over weekends. There was also a discussion about the scoreboard not functioning, with the parks department acknowledging that the scoreboard typically used for games is not operational, primarily due to staffing issues. However, the department partners with the local school system, which sometimes has access to the scoreboard, though they lack consistent staffing on-site. Additionally, the importance of the fields being used not only by local residents but also by visitors from outside the city was highlighted, emphasizing the potential economic benefit for the city. The credit for maintaining the fields was given to the dedicated park staff, especially Eric Dunbar, a local resident who takes pride in his work on the fields. It was also noted that other groups, such as Carter Woodson, have been using the fields, and ongoing conversations with the school system are aimed at ensuring their proper use and maintenance. The team is working toward resolving issues and providing support to local institutions to ensure the fields remain operational.

Councilor Stokes shared her concerns with the raising of the membership rates and what consideration has been given to the kids in subsidized housing. Ms. Martinez clarifies that any Hopewell resident with a youth 17 and under has a free membership. The council has asked Ms. Martinez to look into a sliding scale for membership.

Councilor Joyner wanted more information about the service contracts for the pool. Ms. Martinez answers there was a request for an Aquatics Program Manager position, which would allow for better management of the aquatics department. This new role would enable the department to have four full-time lifeguards, reducing the need for heavy reliance on part-time help. This would create greater staffing stability and allow for more consistent management of the program. The Aquatics Program Manager position would also eliminate the need for a service contract, as everything could be handled in-house. The cost-saving for the city would come from funding the Aquatics Program Manager

role, as it would replace the service contract previously discussed. The \$18,000 mentioned earlier will be included in a future presentation. The clarification was provided that this move would streamline operations and improve efficiency.

Ms. Martinez asked the council for approval to include the potential cost of hiring someone to oversee sports tourism if it is added, as their current staff is already at full capacity. This new position would help ensure that all weekends are fully booked and that the sports tourism program is effectively managed. The mayor agreed and gave Ms. Martinez the ok to look into that.

Councilor Stokes made a motion to adjourn. None opposed.

Meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brittani Williams", is written over a horizontal line.

Brittani Williams, City Clerk

A stylized handwritten signature in black ink is written over a horizontal line.
Johnny Partin, Mayor