

## **MINUTES OF THE MAY 01, 2025, CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING**

A SPECIAL meeting of the Hopewell City Council was held on Tuesday, May 01, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

### **PRESENT:**

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

Councilor Harris makes a motion to waive the rules of the special meeting in order to allow before any action by council on items SB one, SB two, and SB three would be completed to hear all communications regarding these items from the citizens. Councilor Holloway seconds the motion.

Councilor Harris emphasized the importance of transparency and fairness. He expressed concern that the current agenda did not provide an opportunity for public input, highlighting the need for community engagement.

Councilor Holloway then spoke at length, reflecting on his spiritual journey and the divine calling that led him to run for office in 2022, despite initial reluctance. He recounted a conversation with the current mayor, whom he had predicted would ascend to the role based on divine guidance. Holloway acknowledged losing focus due to external influences and divisive voices, leading him to almost resign. He admitted to having been swayed by personal and external agendas, which undermined his original intent of promoting unity and transparency. Holloway urged his fellow council members to recommit to their purpose, seek divine guidance, and focus on collective progress rather than personal revenge or division. He emphasized the need for self-accountability, unity, and spiritual renewal, warning against the dangers of corruption and personal vendettas. In closing, he offered a prayer, calling for divine intervention to restore unity and integrity within the council and the city.

Councilor Stokes expressed her support for the motion put forth by Councilor Harris and seconded by Councilor Holloway, emphasizing the importance of transparency and public participation in the democratic process. She underscored that in a democracy, citizens should have the right to address the council not only individually as elected officials but also publicly at the podium during meetings, especially on matters of significant importance. Stokes urged her fellow council members to permit citizens to speak on the issues being discussed that evening, reinforcing her commitment to transparency and open communication with the public.

#### **ROLL CALL**

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

#### **Motion Fails 4-3**

#### **SPECIAL BUSINESS**

##### **SB-1 - Motion to reconsider Council's decision at the special meeting held on February 12, 2025, regarding the City Manager's employment**

Councilor Ellis makes a motion to reconsider the question of Dr. Concetta Manker's employment, first considered at the special meeting on Wednesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>. Councilor Daye seconds the motion.

Councilor Holloway questioned whether Councilor Ellis had a conflict of interest regarding a motion related to the employment status of the city manager, given that Ellis is both an employee and a superior to the city manager. Holloway acknowledged that councilors are permitted to vote on matters in the best interest of the city but argued that, in this case, the issue at hand involved a potential personal interest since the discussion involved termination without cause. He asked the city attorney for clarification on whether Ellis's involvement constituted a conflict under the State and Local Government Conflict of Interest Act (KOIA).

The attorney responded that the decision regarding personal interest is for each councilor to determine individually and that he lacked the authority to make a ruling. Holloway then referenced campaign statements made by Ellis, suggesting that Ellis had previously indicated reluctance to vote on such matters to avoid conflicts of interest. Holloway further pressed Ellis to state on record whether his actions were in the best interest of the city or based on personal interest. Receiving no direct response, Holloway asserted that Ellis's silence implied personal interest and suggested that the matter be taken to court for further examination of the conflict-of-interest claim.

Councilor Harris addressed the motion to reconsider a previous decision, noting that a similar motion had been discussed extensively in a closed session in February, whereas the current motion lacked any prior discussion. Harris emphasized his desire to hear input from citizens regarding the matter, highlighting that the council's refusal to allow public comment prevented residents from expressing their opinions on the issue. He expressed his frustration with the lack of transparency and urged attendees to recognize that their voices were not being considered by the council in this instance.

Councilor Stokes raised a point of order, directing a question to Mr. Bassett regarding a potential conflict of interest. She referenced a letter from the Commonwealth's Attorney, which suggested a possible conflict that contradicted Bassett's previous statements. Stokes sought clarification on whether the letter, which opposed Bassett's stance, indicated a conflict of interest concerning a council member. Bassett clarified that communications from the Commonwealth's Attorney to the council are not protected under attorney-client privilege and can be discussed openly. However, he reiterated that he is not legally authorized to determine whether a council member has a conflict of interest under the Conflict-of-Interest Act.

Councilor Holloway questioned Anthony Bassett regarding whether the Commonwealth's Attorney explicitly stated that he believed a conflict of interest existed concerning a council member. Bassett responded that, based on the email he reviewed, the Commonwealth's Attorney emphasized the importance of ensuring that no one violates the Conflict-of-Interest Act. Holloway then addressed the audience, expressing frustration that some council members were not representing the citizens' interests and instead pursuing personal agendas. He accused certain members of holding secret meetings to orchestrate the firing of the

City Manager and hiring outside attorneys without full council knowledge. Holloway alleged that he was personally targeted by the Mayor, recounting an incident where the Mayor allegedly threatened to have him removed from his seat and subsequently initiated efforts to collect petitions against him, resulting in felony charges intended to force him out of office. Holloway concluded his remarks as his allotted time expired.

Mayor Partin makes a motion to end discussion. The motion was seconded by Councilor Daye.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Motion Passes 4-3**

The motion on the floor was to reconsider the City Council's decision made during the special meeting held on February 12th, 2025, regarding the employment of the City Manager. A roll call vote was conducted to determine whether the matter would be reconsidered.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Motion Passes 5-2**

The crowd was upset about the action taken on the motion. Mayor Partin moved to the next item.

## **SB-2 - Whether to terminate the City Manager's employment contract**

Councilor Ellis makes a motion to terminate Dr. Concetta Manker without cause, effective immediately, and pay her severance plus certain benefits pursuant to her employment. Councilor Daye seconds the motion.

Councilor Harris expressed concern over the handling of the City Manager situation, emphasizing that he was not involved in the discussions regarding the decision to replace her. He clarified that while he was notified of the action, he was not part of any discussions and had never met the individual being considered as her replacement. Harris conveyed his disappointment with the process, noting its lack of transparency and fairness, and questioned how the council would effectively proceed given the current circumstances.

Councilor Stokes expressed deep disappointment and frustration over the council's decision to terminate Dr. Manka without cause, describing it as a significant setback for the city of Hopewell. As a lifelong resident, she stated that the council's actions have regressed the city by decades and warned that such behavior would deter people from returning. She emphasized that the termination of Dr. Manka, a member of a double-protected class, was, in her professional opinion, a violation of civil rights and extended discrimination, as the Black members of the council were excluded from the decision-making process. Stokes further criticized the lack of transparency and collaboration in other council matters, such as the hiring of the city attorney and board appointments, asserting that decisions were made without the input of all council members, further exacerbating racial and procedural divides.

Councilor Holloway raised a point of order, questioning whether a supermajority vote was required to revisit a previously failed motion, seeking clarification from the city attorney. The attorney clarified that a supermajority was not necessary; instead, the motion must be initiated by a council member who did not join the original motion. Following the clarification, Holloway resumed his earlier comments, alleging targeted actions against specific city employees, including the former and current Chiefs of Police and the city treasurer, Shannon Foskey. He claimed to possess recorded conversations and other evidence that he intended to release publicly, asserting that certain members of the council were orchestrating efforts to replace key personnel with preferred candidates. Holloway framed his statements as being guided by divine direction, emphasizing that he had previously warned community members about these events and was now compelled to speak out.

After the discussion, the mayor moved to the roll call for the motion on the floor.

**ROLL CALL**

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

**Motion Passes 4-3**

**SB-3 - Whether to terminate the City Clerk's employment contract**

Councilor Ellis makes a motion to terminate the employment of Brittani Williams without cause, effective immediately, and to pay her severance plus certain benefits pursuant to her employment agreement. Councilor Daye seconds the motion.

Councilor Harris addressed the council and the public, expressing frustration over the lack of transparency and explanation regarding the recent actions taken against the city clerk. He stated that the majority of the council has not provided any justification for their decisions, neither in February nor presently, despite repeated requests for clarity. Harris criticized a recent statement from certain council members about wanting to "take their city back," questioning its meaning and implications. He reflected on his personal history in the city, recalling his father's repeated unsuccessful attempts to join the council before the ward system was established to promote fairness. Harris emphasized that the ward system was intended to ensure equitable representation and expressed concern that the current actions of the majority undermine that goal. He concluded by reiterating his demand for explanations and accountability, stating that without a clear understanding of the council's direction, he is uncertain about how the city will function effectively moving forward.

Councilor Holloway addressed the council and the public, strongly condemning the actions taken against the city clerk and city manager, asserting that the council members voting in favor of the terminations have violated contractual obligations and state laws. He accused them of forming a covert alliance to target multiple officials, including the chief of police and Healthy Families program leaders,

without proper evaluation processes or fair treatment. Holloway emphasized that both contracts for the city clerk and city manager required performance evaluations that were intentionally withheld, characterizing the actions as discriminatory retaliation, particularly against Black officials. He stated that lawsuit papers would be filed by the next morning, alleging breaches of contract and violations of federal and state laws. Holloway further claimed that the dismissals were driven by racial bias and a racially motivated agenda orchestrated by certain council members and the mayor, who he alleged conspired illegally to orchestrate the terminations without notifying the entire council. Concluding his remarks, Holloway expressed his intention to lead an effort to have the responsible council members removed from office, invoking a call for divine justice and accountability.

Councilor Stokes addressed the audience, emphasizing the power of the voters as the true majority, urging them not to view the four council members who voted for the terminations as the majority but rather to recognize their own power to effect change. She encouraged registered voters in Hopewell to reconsider their representation if they felt the current council was not adequately representing their interests. Stokes expressed her disapproval of the termination of the city clerk, stating that she needed proper documentation to justify such an action, including evidence of failure and an opportunity to correct it. She reiterated her commitment to fighting for civil rights and holding accountable those who violate the law, highlighting her history of working alongside Reverend Harris and civil rights committees. Concluding her remarks, Stokes reiterated the power of the electorate to reclaim control of the council and urged the citizens to take action.

Brittani Williams, the city clerk, addressed the council and audience, expressing her frustration and disappointment over the council's decision to terminate her employment. She highlighted her military service, emphasizing that she served her country to protect the right to vote, including votes like the one taking place that night. Williams stated that she had consistently received praise for her work, including from Vice Mayor Joyner, and had not received any negative evaluations that would justify her termination. She argued that she had diligently completed all tasks assigned to her, including updating minutes dating back to 2019, despite being hired in 2023, and that she had successfully improved the office's operations to pass audits. Williams questioned the votes against her from newer council members who, she claimed, had not taken the time to get to know her or evaluate her work. She accused the council of acting out of racism and personal vendettas, noting that she had been brought in with unanimous support but was now being ousted without cause. Williams concluded by declaring it a sad day for Hopewell and stating that she would pray for the council members, calling their actions evil.

## **ROLL CALL**

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

## **Motion Passes 4-3**

## **CLOSED MEETING**

Councilor Ellis makes a motion to go into a closed meeting under Va. Code § 2.2-3711 (A)(1) to discuss and consider personnel matters, including the assignment and performance of specific appointees and employees of City Council (interim City Manager and interim City Clerk). Councilor Daye seconds the motion.

Councilor Holloway delivered an emotionally charged statement during the city council meeting, expressing deep frustration with what he described as efforts to silence him and undermine transparency. He declared that the council was moving beyond mere talk and into action, suggesting that those aligned with him were preparing to challenge the council's decisions through other means, possibly legal or civic. Holloway accused other members of misusing closed session meetings to make last-minute appointments to city boards, such as the Board of Equalization, without proper representation or public input. He criticized the fact that two out of three members appointed to that board were from the mayor's ward, which he described as the wealthiest in the city, implying an imbalance in representation. Holloway admitted to recording closed session meetings, a controversial act, but insisted he did so with legal backing and out of necessity to expose unethical behavior. He further alleged that new resolutions were being crafted to punish council members like himself who challenged the majority, characterizing these efforts as retaliatory. When interrupted and told his remarks were not pertinent to the motion on the floor, Holloway pushed back, arguing that his comments were directly relevant because they explained the true purpose and misuse of the closed sessions. Throughout his remarks, he invoked his faith, promising that justice would come swiftly and criticizing his colleagues for prioritizing their own interests over those of the people. His statement painted a picture of a council in



turmoil, marked by mistrust, political maneuvering, and a battle over transparency and representation.

Councilor Stokes expressed her opposition to entering closed session, stating that the matters intended for discussion had already been addressed publicly. She questioned the necessity of further private deliberation and suggested that moving into closed session would serve as an excuse rooted in a racial divide. Councilor Stokes, expressing her position, stated that she would not support going into closed session at that time. She explained that the matter appeared to have already been discussed, or at least predetermined, and that there seemed to be only one option presented for a vote. Based on her observations since taking office in January, she believed the decision had effectively already been made. Consequently, she saw no justification for entering into a closed session and clearly voiced her opposition.

Councilor Harris stated that he would not be voting to go into closed session, expressing that there was no need for it given that the direction and outcome of the matter seemed already determined. He voiced his frustration with the proceedings, saying he had reached his limit for the night. Indicating he was done participating in the meeting, he noted that he would be outside in the parking lot and emphasized the need for the council to find a way to move the city forward. Concluding his remarks, he thanked everyone and exited the discussion.

#### **ROLL CALL**

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

#### **Motion Passes 4-3**

Councilor Daye makes a motion to reconvene the open meeting. Vice Mayor Joyner seconds the motion.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
--------------------	-----

Councilor Harris-	Absent
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Absent
Councilor Holloway-	Absent

**Motion Passes 4-0**

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**

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

**Motion Passes 4-0**

**SPECIAL BUSINESS**

**SB-4 - Appointment of Interim City Manager**

Councilor Daye makes a motion to appoint Michael Rogers as Interim City Manager under Chapter Five, Section Five of the city charter at the terms presented to council, effective immediately, and to direct the mayor to execute an agreement to that effect. Councilor Ellis seconds the motion.

**ROLL CALL**

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Absent
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes

Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Stokes-	Absent
Councilor Holloway-	Absent

**Motion Passes 4-0**

**SB-5 - Appointment of Interim City Clerk**

Mayor Partin stated that Mrs. Sade Allen will remain the Deputy Clerk and will continue to run the office.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully Submitted,



**Sade' Allen, Deputy City Clerk**

  
**Johnny Partin, Mayor**