

**MINUTES OF THE MAY 28, 2024 CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**

A REGULAR meeting of the Hopewell City Council was held on Tuesday May 28, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** John B. Partin, Mayor  
Jasmine Gore, Vice Mayor  
Rita Joyner, Councilor  
Michael Harris, Councilor  
Janice Denton, Councilor  
Brenda Pelham, Councilor (Late 6:05p)  
Dominic Holloway, Councilor (Late 6:27p)

**CLOSED MEETING:**

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to go into closed meeting pursuant to Va. Code Section § 2.2-371 1 (A)(I) to discuss and consider personnel matters, including board and commission appointments; the assignment and performance of specific appointee and employees of City Council, and to the extent such discussion will be aided thereby, Vice Mayor Gore seconds the motion.

<b>ROLL CALL</b>	Councilor Harris-	Yes
	Mayor Partin-	Yes
	Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
	Councilor Denton-	Yes
	Councilor Pelham-	(Absent)
	Council Holloway-	(Absent)
	Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 5-0**

**Reconvene Open Meeting**

Councilor Holloway makes a motion to reconvene open meeting. Vice Mayor Gore seconds the motion.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	(Abstain)
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	(Abstain)
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 5-0**

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to appoint Mr. Thomas Wagstaff to the 250 Committee. Councilor Pelham seconds the motion.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	(Absent)
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	(Absent)
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	(Abstain)
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 4-0**

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to appoint Sophie Benkendorf, Wayne Taylor, John Cappiali and Rizik Hamill to the Towing Board. Councilor Holloway seconds the motion.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	(Absent)
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	(Absent)
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 5-0**

**CERTIFICATION:**

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 closed meeting?

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	(Abstain)
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	(Abstain)
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 5-0**

## WORK SESSION

**WS1- Hopewell Marina Proposed Slip Fees – Charles Bennett Economic Development Director.** Mr. Bennett states he has been meeting with the folks at the marina, had a meeting in march at the library, where he invited all the currant slip holders to come and listen to their concerns about the marina. Mr. Bennett invited everybody to come or watch the work session tonight and also informed them there will be a public hearing in two weeks. He asks council if it would okay if the folks who come tonight during “Communications from Citizens” if they wanted to say anything for you all to think about between now and the work session if they can make comments then at that point. He states the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, which is my department, will be taking over the marina operations on July 1, 2024. Since March of 2014, the marina has been leased to Fish Tales and they were the ones who were running all the day to day operations and they were the ones receiving all of the revenue from all of the fees and they were paying a fixed amount to the city of Hopewell. Moving forward, as of July 1<sup>st</sup> the city will be in a direct lease with each one of the slip holders. So, for the purpose of preparing that lease document, this presentation is a work session, so we can have a discussion about recommended fees and some of the particulars about what would go into that lease document. He gives an overview of details and changes to the marina. He would like to raise the fees to what is considered market and raise the fees to the point we can have the revenues necessary to do the repairs and maintenance to maintain the marina in a safe manner. He looked at the marinas in the area to determine how they were charging for their slip fees and compared it to what we have. Mr. Bennett goes over the differences with our marina in comparison to other surrounding marinas. The Richmond yacht Basin, their covered slips are \$300 a month, they are completely full and have a waiting list. Their uncovered slips are \$200 a month. The Anchor Port Marina does not have any covered slips. They have uncovered slips and they are \$290 a month for a 50ft boat. The Jordan Point Marina do not have covered slips and a comparable 50ft boat only fits in a few of their slips. They have more slips available for smaller boats but the uncovered slip that would receive that size boat would be comparatively \$325 a month. This is the average for our area that I see for both covered and uncovered. As I said, there is really not a good comparison for because we are the only people left, besides Richmond Yacht Basin, that have covered slips in this area. Mr. Bennett would like to propose a pretty dramatic

increase in the fees over what has been recently or in the past 10 years. He states the primary reason for this increase is because I need a lot of money to fix the marina to make it safe and also for it to continue into the future. In order to save the marina, we need to generate the revenue to do that and bring it in from the slip holders, who are utilizing the areas of the marina. He would like to increase the covered slips to \$400 a month but do a 10% discount to residents of Hopewell. The 10% discount, it would be \$360 a month for the covered slips. Currently, the slip agreements that I was provided from Fish Tales show that they are charging \$210 per month for those covered slips. The uncovered slips I would like to set at \$300 a month and then provide a 10% discount to Hopewell residents; so that would be \$270 for Hopewell residents and currently those are \$162 a month. The boat ramp fees and daily parking are currently \$8 and I would like to raise that to \$10, there would be a 10% discount to Hopewell residents but I want to do away with annual passes. He explains the automated, solar powered, parking meter that will be used for the ramp fee collections, how it works and how it will help capture lost fees. For overnight parking which is pretty rare, he is proposing a \$15 fee with a 10% discount to Hopewell residents so it will be \$13.50. There is currently posted or published a \$5 overnight parking fee but couldn't see where that was being collected in any way so I'm not sure if that is happening. Mr. Bennett goes over the structure of the proposed leases. He discusses a lottery and why he is leaning towards using it. These are all things he would like council to think about between now and when we have the public hearing in two weeks.

### **REGULAR MEETING**

Mayor Partin calls the Regular Meeting to order

**PRESENT:** John B. Partin, Mayor  
Jasmine Gore, Vice Mayor  
Rita Joyner, Councilor  
Michael Harris, Councilor  
Janice Denton, Councilor  
Brenda Pelham, Councilor  
Dominic Holloway, Councilor

Prayer by Reverend Blow, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Mayor

Gore.

Councilor Holloway makes a motion to amend the agenda to add a public hearing for the FY25 School Budget (2<sup>nd</sup> reading). Vice Mayor Gore seconds the motion.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 7-0**

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda and second by Mayor Partin.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 7-0**

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

Councilor Denton makes a motion to wave the rules to allow citizens to speak on items that are on the agenda. Vice Mayor Gore seconds the motion.

### **ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

### Motion Passes 7-0

1. Sarah' Fuller- Thanks to everybody for the cleanup that we had on Norfolk Street this past Saturday. She thanks the Mr. Mayor for coming out and being a big helping hand in everything. She talks about how much trash was picked up and how the trash is coming back and forth. She asks neighbors if you see trash we can definitely pick it up. Ms. Fuller thanks the Keep Hopewell Beautiful Committee for their donations to the cleanup. There will be more events from Ward five doing cleanups and family fund days. She comments it's a welcome to see you back in person Mr. Harris, you have been missed I'm glad to see you. You have been in my prayers.
2. Donnie Perkins- from Chesterfield. Wants to speak on behalf of the boat slips. States the members do agree that we need an increase but not that much. He states he hasn't heard nothing tonight about the money the boat slips bring in and is that going towards the marina. Mayor Partin answers Mr. Perkins to explain what the Vice mayor is asking for and gives some information on how the contract is based. Mr. Perkins confirms that the city would be taking it over and where the slip funds are going with Mayor Partin. Mr. Perkins agrees the marina does need some work and asks why can't we fix a little bit of it up as we get the money and don't raise the rent all at one time.
3. Evelyn Britton- States she has been a resident of Hopewell for 41 years. She

gives her reason for coming before council to reiterate and address three points. The first, she talks about real estate taxes assessments and other tax increases. She requests that the city show a good faith effort to work with the citizens and consider the implementation of a more reasonable extension plan for the payment of taxes due in June. Number 2, she states with the information provided by the Robert Bobb Group that the citizens are concerned about the use of funds. Ms. Britton describes some concerns she's noted.

Vice Mayor Gore makes a motion to allow Ms. Britton to continue speaking. Councilor Joyner seconds the motion.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 7-0**

Number 3 and the final one, also in light of the recent status report from the Robert Bob Group, she states there are several risk factors that present a potential for delaying or derailing an attempt at budget reconciliation and improvement to standard operating procedures. She gives some ideas as to the needs for the citizens of Hopewell

4. Betty Washington- states she would like to salute people coming together because there are concerns, because you are there as elected officials to take care of the city and we trust in you and what you will do. She asks that as we listen to the citizens and comments she is making, that these are citizens that want to and intend to pay taxes. She comments on the Treasurer's office offering payment plans to help citizens and at certain times of the year, there are more obligations to do. She asks that as you continue to listen this evening, please be reassuring that you really do want to make sure that each person in Hopewell is taken care of. She comments on growing up and living in Hopewell and how she



wants to see Hopewell improve and develop. We want to work together with you to accomplish this. Ms. Washington ends with we want you to really take a hard look and please don't put that extra financial pressure, as you're looking for ways to raise taxes on our backs. Thank you for listening and thank you for all you do.

5. Joseph LaTendry- states that you are all talking about money. If you raise the slip rent too high, people are going to leave. How are you going to create money that way when people are leaving and if they all leave, there's no money. It's too high.
6. William Hayde- Speaks about the marina. He states that all these other marinas that he's looked into all those boats are based on 25 to 50 ft. You've got one boat 50 ft. or larger in Hopewell. But the amenities other marinas have, outweigh what we have in Hopewell. He details some differences between Hopewell and other marina amenities. Mr. Hayde states the money he is asking to go up for some of us would be 166% that's a big jump. He talks again about the amenities of other marinas in comparison to Hopewell's marina. Richmond Yacht Basin is private and is gated. Mr. Hayde tells of more services and amenities other marinas currently has that Hopewell marina does not have. We are willing to help. States he has taken care of a lot of the upgrades to that dock because nothing has been done in the past. He shares he is on the dock commission. States no one from city council has addressed any of them to help. States that we can improve that marina and the dock with the help of the people we have there, not just outside but the ones that are existing. All they have to do is ask.
7. Sheila Johnson- Gives a brief history in the city of Hopewell. States she does see some improvements in Hopewell. Her only concern is the taxes on the property and taxes on the vehicles. States a lot of us cannot afford the increase and barely making it now. You only get a certain amount of time to pay these things and you can't borrow money to pay taxes within 45 days. So we have to look at that too when we get the increase. She talks about Waste Management, the new trash service but only getting one trash can. She gives a scenario with a family of 3 to 4 family members and having only one trash can. When we are making these decisions, we have to look at all the areas we are making decisions on because its not just the citizens that's not sitting on the board. You have to look at the communities. She thanked the young lady that invited her to the

meeting and that she will be involved at the meetings. She offers her assistance on the committees. Mayor Partin tells Ms. Johnson about page 3 of the agenda, where she can find vacancies for boards and commissions and we would love to have her.

8. David Walker- States he thinks we need help with the transition plan. We are at the beginning of June; the city is taking over the marina July 1. We sit here with a proposal but I don't know that we have a transition to July 1 for those that are there. Mr. Walker lists questions he has for the transition. I think we need some help because there are only 30 days between now and then. Those that are there, do want to be there but we want to figure out what's the next step. He states he has had his boat in the marina for 10 years and since his boat does not come out of the marina, pays taxes to the City of Hopewell for my boat that is in Hopewell. He states he feels like a Hopewell resident. He doesn't have a house here but I come here every summer enjoys summertime, Randolph Market. Mr. Walker comments he's sorry not a Hopewell resident and whatever help he can get he will appreciate.
9. David Sweatt- States he's been at the marina 10 years and he likes it. He understands there's a lot that needs to be done there and it's gotten out of hand. Continues to say if the rates go as high as it's been talked about tonight, I'm going to have to leave. I can't afford to live there. States he pays his fees to Fishtails annually and wants to know if he has to move, how to go about getting his money back for the rest of this year because he paid in January. As soon as I can get an answer to that I can make a decision as to what I'm going to do but states he can't pay \$400 to be in a slip when there's nothing else there other than a slip.
10. Debbie Randolph- States that while she doesn't have a boat in the marina, she was against selling that property as Ms. Joyner said earlier. I did not want our assets be turned over to someone else. She cautions the council, that she has watched in those 20 years, as others flounder in how to manage the marina. She goes on to state that she would encourage a better plan than what we have had up till now. If we are going to set up contracts, as councilor Gore said, make sure those contracts work and they are what they need them to be. Most of what I've seen is re-appropriation of funds. Funds that, through Rec and Parks, were supposed to go to different aspects in the marina and got reappropriated through the years to other Rec and Parks projects. Now, we are at a point that we want to

improve the marina we wanted to do that two years ago, but we don't have the money. Ms. Randolph comments don't keep reappropriating and robbing Peter to pay Paul because sooner or later we are going to end up right here again with something else. She has confidence that you all will come up with a good plan or get our economic development person to develop a better plan and work with the current slip owners. She states increasing the fees seems reasonable too. She speaks about looking at big plans, having goals and objectives for those who work for us and about having five-year plans. I hope you all will preach and live that in your council and try and make something work for this marina because it is a big aspect.

11. Darlene Thompson- have watched you'll month after month voting to spend money outside the budget, I repeatedly asked members of city council were was this money coming, because at least 85-90% of the problem we are dealing with was causes by CITY COUNCIL and the CITY MANAGER spending money outside of the budget, 3 new councilman joining last year, starting with the same reckless spending habits, CITIZENS STUCKED WITH THE BILL, I don't give my vote to send me the bill, each one of you run to supposedly work on behalf of the CITIZENS and this CITY, but each ONE of you'll are QUILTY of playing POLITICS at the lower level and disregarding the will of the CITIZENS, I heard that grand speech from GORE about wrong information being sprayed , I asked the CITY MANAGER AND some of CITY COUNCIL to send out NEWS LETTLERS quarterly it all fell on death ear you'll didn't want the citizens to know what's going on with CITY COUNCIL, YOU have CITY COUNCILMAN that have been on council from 1-20+yrs with the same reckless habits now is willing to spend 2.3 million of tax paying dollars and send the bill to the CITIZENS once again, A CITY MANAGER that's being paid \$160.000+being trained by the BOBB group to do her job, THIS BOBB group has already milked the city for \$2.3 million in 7 months and they're not finished, were is there contract and deadline and where is the city CFO that will need to be trained another \$3- 400.000, like I have said anyone should be able to run for council, but there should be some QUALIFICATIONS that is required because maybe we wouldn't be in this MESS

12. Michael Nick - The very recent increase in real estate assessment, cigarette and lodging taxes, sewage and trash collection increase, has reopened wounds felt by the citizens of Hopewell. Although I understand that an increase in taxes represents a revenue stream for the city, I wonder if leadership truly aware of how an increase places undue burden on many of our citizens who are already struggling to make ends meet and already trying to figure out how they're going to pay last year over assessment of their property value, they're living on a fixed incomes, I request that this CITY COUNCIL and the CITY MANAGER show a good faith effort to work with the citizens and find other ways to get funding for Capital improvement by STOPPING the reckless spending. The citizens of Hopewell is requesting a TOWN HALL MEETING with the CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER created to allow for in-person conversation with the citizens, An efforts to proceed with this town hall meeting would be a positive attempt to enhance the ethical communication between Hopewell City and City Government .( PLEASE CITY COUNCIL DO SOMETHING }

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

**PH1- Proposed FY25 Budget(2<sup>nd</sup> reading)- Dr. Manker, City Manager.** Dr. Manker begins her presentation by stating the school is here represented by the finance Director Ms. Janel, to request an amendment for FY 24 school board operating budget. This budget is to increase where they have received funding throughout the year, and it is customary to make a budget adjustment, she gives the floor to Ms. Janel. She starts by saying the schools have approved supplemental appropriation in the amount of \$6,906,521.00 to the fiscal year 24 budget, \$6,427,940.00 is to the operating fund and \$478,581 is to the cafeteria fund. She goes into further detail of the different grants received. She states none of these are increasing the amount the city has to give, they are funds they have received elsewhere, she is asking for council to approve, they have already approved them for the school budget, so now they need the public hearing for council to approve as well.

Vice Mayor Gore asks what is the delay that this is just coming to them. Ms. Janel states the grants were received at multiple times throughout the year, and she mentions to Russ to bring to council, but they wanted to wait until they received all grants at one time. She suggested changing and coming per grant if that is requested by council.

**Mayor Partin opens up the public hearing, no one signed up, public hearing**

**was closed.**

Councilor Joyner makes a motion that city council approve the resolution to amend the FY 24 Hopewell public schools supplemental budget appropriation as presented, Vice Mayor Gore seconds the motion.

Councilor Holloway asks does this budget include the last request they had, the answer is no because that request will be for the following FY.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	(Abstain)
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes
Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 6-0**

**PH2 – Proposed FY25 budget (2<sup>nd</sup> Reading)** – Dr. Manker begins her presentation first ensuring Mr. Russ can hear and respond to any questions council may have. Tonight the FY25 budget is the final reading.

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to extend until end of PH2, Councilor Holloway seconds the motion.

Vice Mayor Gore asks Dr. Manker to have Mr. Russ drop off the zoom and come back in because he will need to be available to answer questions.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	(Abstain)
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes

Councilor Pelham-	Yes
Council Holloway-	No
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

### **Motion Passes 5-1**

Dr. Manker begins again stating this is the second reading. She begins on page 2 of her presentation. She stated the budget process began in December with revenue forecast and a budget entry in January and then began budget work sessions beginning in March. In April the tax resolution was adopted for the current year. May 14 was the public hearing first reading for the budget, and today is the second reading. She then goes over the budget Ordinance and goes over the highlights. She goes into further detail of her presentation with council. She goes through each department and states they are only asking to fund the federal projects the city has previous 5 years made commitments to. The city portion of that is 1.9 million, federal aid is 1.6, VDOT \$267, 000 and storm water fees is \$904,000.00, that gives the total of 4.7 in capital projects. She moves forward in her presentation giving further information based on the provided presentation. The revenue highlights for this year's budget is the increase of the real estate tax from 1.13 cent per 100 assessed value to 1.17 cent. She goes over other tax changes and approvals for this proposed budget. For the schools, the city contribution will remain flat. Hopewell regional water has an operational budget of 18 million and capital of 9.6. Industry partners are required to fund the next service for regional water which is approximately 1 million dollars for FY25. She states they are working hard to have the budget book out by June 30<sup>th</sup>. She goes over the provided proposed budget resolution and she is asking council to adopt the budget, she yields the floor to Mr. Russ to take any questions.

Councilor Holloway states he does not agree with approving the budget on tonight, he feels a lot have been rushed to in the past and issues have been given to the citizens. He thinks it is not appropriate to rush through and approve this budget tonight.

### **Mayor Opens up the public hearing for anyone to speak.**

Darlene Thompson – Ward 6, she states as councilor Holloway has said, she thinks they should not approve the budget tonight, they have bene able to find money suddenly from salary savings and other ways. She thinks they should take a harder

look before approving this budget. She states this was a rush, they always finish around June 30<sup>th</sup> and all of a sudden everything was finished by May 15. She feels if they take a harder look they may be able to find the capital improvement. She states there was money available senator Kane had 98 million dollars available and she went online and saw Hopewell got \$242,000.00. She states they money is coming in through grants or otherwise. She says she can't spend what is not in her household and council should do the same. She hopes they consider not approving the budget tonight.

**Mayor Partin closes public hearing.**

Councilor Denton makes a motion to approve the FY 24/25 budget resolution as presented, Councilor Joyner seconds the motion.

Councilor Pelham asks about section 24 able to transfer funds between accounts. She thought it should state a certain amount. She was given direction the amount was in a different part of the section. Mr. Russ states there is 25,000 that can be moved, Councilor Pelham states that section should show that amount. It was cleared up for Councilor Pelham that the section she is referring to states council must approve the amount being moved.

Vice Mayor Gore states she wants points of clarification. She states she did not vote to raise taxes, and voted against trash contract, and storm water fees. She thinks it is important that council should state why they vote the way they did. She mentions about the comment of lack of financial policy, but she states there is a lack of accountability of staff and addressing the audits. She states there is a large amount of people who are not paying taxes, to include large businesses. She has asked for this to be brought to special meetings that have not happened yet. Looking at contracts and how they are procuring the contracts is important that needs to be reviewed. She stated she has been very consistent year after year regarding her position. She mentions it is important when you say council of you all, but if citizens have issues with something they need to address their councilor and not the council as a body. She states not to make general statements because the energy is given to the councilor who is doing what they do not agree with.

Councilor Holloway states he agrees with what Vice Mayor said tonight. He sees so many on fixed income and his heart bleeds for those people. He speaks to what one of the citizens stated that council did not listen to the citizens. He states voting tonight is with taxes already being set in place. He states there should be some type of relief for those on fixed income or disability. He states to go after those who are

capable of paying taxes but are not because they are causing the biggest burden on the city. He states going forward it is his hope and his prayer that they make best of what they can with what they have inherited because this did not just come one or two years ago, it has been here for a long time and they are catching the brunt of it.

Councilor Joyner states one thing mentioned had to do with the assessments and to remember they will be reassessing in January and some of these assessments may go down. She states they tried to minimize the impact on the citizens as much as they could, and in January they can take a look at their assessment and appeal back to three years if it is necessary.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Yes
Vice Mayor Gore-	Yes
Councilor Denton-	Yes
Councilor Pelham-	No
Council Holloway-	Yes
Councilor Joyner-	Yes

**Motion Passes 6-1**

**Meeting automatically Adjourned due to end of PH2.**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Respectfully Submitted,



**Brittani Williams, City Clerk**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Johnny Partin, Mayor**