

**August 1, 2022
Special Meeting**

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

A Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hopewell, Virginia, was held Monday, August 1, 2022, at 7:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, Municipal Building, 300 North Main Street, Hopewell, Virginia.

PRESENT: Patience Bennett, Mayor (Ward 7)
Johnny Partin, Vice Mayor (Ward 3)
Deborah Randolph, Councilor (Ward 1)
Jasmine Gore, Councilor (Ward 4)
Janie Denton, Councilor (Ward 5)
Councilor Holloway (Ward 2)

ABSENT: Councilor Brenda Pelham (Ward 6)

Staff: Mollie P. Bess, City Clerk
J. March Altman, Jr., City Manager
Danielle F. Smith, City Attorney

Mayor Bennett called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Roll Call:	Mayor Bennett	-	Present
	Vice Mayor Partin	-	Present
	Councilor Randolph	-	Present
	Councilor Holloway	-	Present – (remotely)
	Councilor Gore	-	Present
	Councilor Denton	-	Present
	Councilor Pelham	-	Absent

City Clerk ask Councilor Holloway to state the reason that she is joining virtually, her response was medical. Vote is taken to allow/deny Councilor Holloway to join remotely.

Motion to allow Councilor Holloway to join remotely made by Vice Mayor Partin and seconded by Councilor Gore

Roll Call:	Vice Mayor Partin	-	Yes
	Councilor Gore	-	Yes
	Councilor Denton	-	Yes
	Mayor Bennett	-	Yes
	Councilor Randolph	-	Yes

Motion Passes: 5 – Ayes
0 – Nays

Motion made by Vice Mayor Partin and seconded by Councilor Holloway that we go into Closed Session pursuant to Va. Code Section §2.2-3711(A)(1) for the purpose of the appointment of an Interim City Manager.

**August 1, 2022
Special Meeting**

Roll Call:	Councilor Holloway	-	Yes
	Vice Mayor Partin	-	Yes
	Councilor Gore	-	Yes
	Councilor Denton	-	Yes
	Mayor Bennett	-	No
	Councilor Randolph	-	No

Motion Passes: 4 – Ayes
2 – Nays

Motion made by Councilor Gore to reconsider her vote.

Mayor Bennett stated that it would take those that voted YES for Councilor Gore to be able to reconsider.

Roll Call:	Vice Mayor Partin	-	Yes
	Councilor Holloway	-	Yes
	Councilor Denton	-	No

Motion Passes: 2/1

Councilor Randolph indicated that she did not vote and Mayor Bennett stated that she was not on the prevailing side, so she was not allowed to vote.

As a result, motion previously made to go into Closed Session fails.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Partin and seconded by Councilor Gore that we appoint Dr. Concetta Manker as the Interim City Manager effective August 11, 2022.

Councilor Denton stated that she was opposed to this for several reasons, she stated that we have excellent employees but no one qualified with experience to be the City Manager. She stated she reached out to a former City Manager who had over 25 years of experience as a City Manager. She asked if he had been approached and he stated No. Councilor Denton stated that with everything going on in the City right now, that we need a strong City Manager. She indicated that this was nothing against Dr. Manker, she is a wonderful director, because she is.

Mayor Bennett interrupted Councilor Denton to make her aware that her time was up. Councilor Denton stated that there was no time limit for speaking on special meetings and Mayor Bennett informed her that there was, City Attorney Danielle Smith acknowledged that the Mayor is correct in imposing time limits at special meetings.

Mayor Bennett then acknowledged Councilor Randolph to speak. Councilor Randolph indicated that she had a Point of Information directed to the person that made the motion. There was no mention of pay increase and is that going to be something that since we are not going to be in closed session to speak about, are we looking at that or has anyone discussed that. Vice Mayor Partin stated it would have been nice to have had the support to go into closed session which you unfortunately voted against, just like anyone else so he automatically entitled to the 10% increase and any other further discussion on that will have to take place in Closed Session.

**August 1, 2022
Special Meeting**

Councilor Randolph indicated that she had made her feelings known in a previous closed meeting where she indicated that it might be more beneficial to have an outside firm, the previous interim attorney had given Council some names, and felt the qualifications that Council might need to have someone could be met with one of those outside firms and could also help Council resolve issues that Council seems to readily have concerning staff previously. It will be costly but with the funds that we have available that this would be the time and place to spend that, to get us someone and have this firm help us find someone as well. We have an outside firm for the requirements of hiring somebody and this firm could do it all for us. It seems the decision was already made before we got here tonight and she is not going to vote for it tonight. Mr. Byerly's name was not even brought up for consideration, however, she would not have voted for him either.

Vice Mayor Partin was then called upon and stated that there was some comments he would like to provide some clarification on. There was a former City Manager that was recommended and he thinks very highly of that individual, calls and asks him for advice and for his perspective. However, he was told by another member on City Council that he was sick and probably unable to do it and also was told that by a friend of his. Out of respect for him and his health, it was decided not to pursue him any further. As far as Mr. Byerly, he has no interest in this position. He enjoys what he does now. He stated that he support Dr. Manker as Interim City Manager and feels that she will do a good job and resolve some of the issues that are currently going on in the City.

Councilor Gore then spoke and thanked Vice Mayor Partin for stating the record straight on some of the points raised. She wanted to share that this decision, as though it has been framed as if this was discussed without all members of Council being included that is also not the case. Each member of Council was allowed to submit their preference on how to proceed and during the poll it was cumulated to see which opinion was the one that had the most support. Essentially everyone had an opportunity to say who they wanted to see in the position or if another group would serve in the capacity and that was totaled and tallied and sent out to every member of Council. There was no prior backroom conversations other than what we all did as a group. Also, some clarity on Council having this meeting today. There was a meeting called about two weeks ago, the first one was cancelled for lack of a quorum, just for the record a quorum stated before the meeting was notified and sent to the public that it was not able to be obtained. Prior to the notice being sent to the public, staff and Council knew that a majority was not going to be in attendance. A second meeting was called a day after that meeting, a majority of Council shared that they could be in attendance to get this over with, but the meeting was cancelled and it was stated that it was for lack of quorum, which is also incorrect. Most of those that said they could be in attendance, found out when the meeting was cancelled that, that was the case. Councilor Gore asked Vice Mayor Partin if she was being accurate with that. Vice Mayor Partin stated yes. Councilor Gore indicated that she was uncertain when the City Attorney had left the room, she then asked the Clerk, Ms. Bess to put on upcoming meeting to discuss sanctioning distributing closed session information from members of Council and also the performance of Councilors outside of the Council meetings. There has been a lot of misinformation shared on-line in regards to this and with the newspapers and t.v. But most importantly, the most flagrant abuse has been disclosing closed session, which are also violations of City Council.

Councilor Gore calls for the vote.

Councilor Denton asked for a Point of Order. Mayor Bennett stated "there is a call for the vote on the floor". Mayor Bennett stated when there is a call for the vote unless you are calling for a point of order to understand what the call for vote is that should be your point of order, if not, we have a call for the vote on the floor. Councilor Denton stated she is asking the city attorney to give her some information, Mayor Bennett stated again "there is a call for the vote on the floor". Councilor Denton stated, "so you are not

**August 1, 2022
Special Meeting**

going to let me” and Mayor Bennet stated it is not that I am not going to let you, I am asking are you asking to get a clear understanding of the call for the vote? Mayor Bennett stated, there is a call for the vote on the floor, that is Parliamentary Procedure, am I not correct? City Attorney stated yes. Mayor Bennett address the Clerk to please do roll call and this is a call for the vote.

Roll Call:	Councilor Holloway	-	Yes
	Vice Mayor Partin	-	Yes
	Councilor Gore	-	Yes
	Councilor Denton	-	No
	Mayor Bennett	-	Yes
	Councilor Randolph	-	No

Motion Passes: 4 – Ayes
2 – Nays

Mayor Bennett then asked the Clerk to restate the motion.

The Clerk restated the motion as follows:

The motion is to appoint Dr. Manker as Interim City Manager effective August 11, 2022.

Roll Call:	Councilor Holloway	-	Yes
	Vice Mayor Partin	-	Yes
	Councilor Gore	-	Yes
	Councilor Denton	-	No
	Mayor Bennett	-	Yes
	Councilor Randolph	-	No

Motion Passes: 4 – Ayes
2 – Nays

Motion to adjourn: 6/0

Meeting Adjourned

Patience Bennett, Mayor

Mollie Bess, City Clerk