

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 24, 2024 CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

A REGULAR meeting of the Hopewell City Council was held on Tuesday September 24, 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
Dominic Holloway, Councilor (Virtual)

Councilor Pelham makes a motion to allow Councilor Holloway to participate remotely. Councilor Harris seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion passes 6-0

CLOSED MEETING:

Councilor Holloway makes a motion to go into closed meeting pursuant to Va.

Code Section § 2.2-371 1 (A)(30) to discuss and consider personnel matters, including board and commission appointments; the assignment and performance of specific appointee and employees of City Council, and Va. Code Section § 2.2-3711 (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.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 7-0

Reconvene Open Meeting

Councilor Pelham makes a motion to reconvene open meeting. Mayor Partin seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

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

Motion Passes 5-0

WORK SESSION

WS-1 – Conditional Use Permit to construct parcel #014-1585 to a single-family dwelling on a non-conforming lot– Chris Ward, Planning Commission Director

Director Ward begins his presentation stating the request involves the ability to construct a single-family dwelling on a non-conforming lot which is parcel #014-585 located on Suffolk Street. He shared the applicants are Ibrahim and Tanya Giwa. The property is located in Ward 5 and zoned R-2. Chris shared all the proper ads were placed in the paper properly and adjacent property owners were notified. Chris supplied a picture of the map that shows the general location of the property. Chris also supplied a close end aerial of the property that shows the property's odd trapezoid shaped lot size. He stated the minimum lot size in R-2 is 75 feet wide and 7500 square feet and Suffolk Street parcel #014-1585 is 70 feet wide and 7281 square feet so the non-conformities are with the width and the total lot size. Chris discussed the applicant's proposal of a two-story single-family dwelling with three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, 1665 square feet home showing pictures of the front and rear elevations. Chris informed council at the planning commission meeting, the

applicants did take some advice from the planning commissioners and are going to be making some minor modifications to the elevation and will have them when it is brought back for a public hearing. He showed the side elevations showing one of the changes that would be made by adding more windows. Chris shared the staff analysis believed the application does meet the approval criteria for conditional use permits and consistent with the comprehensive plan and the home is significantly larger than the typical home in that neighborhood. He informed council the average size of homes on the street is 1187 square feet. He also shared there were some questions to whether the house could properly meet setbacks and it can. Chris presented council with the staff's recommendations on the application of recommending approval of the conditional use permit with the conditions of the new home having 12 inch minimum eaves along the roof edges, the lot will have a minimum coverage of 20% tree canopy, driveway of asphalt or concrete, stone or brick foundation on all 4 sides, front foundation plantings, and that the final house design will be substantial conformance with the final design and the applicants agree with all the conditions. Chris informed council the planning commission recommends 5-0 to approve the application. He advised council after the September 5th public hearing they did not modify any of staffs recommended conditions.

Council asked director Chris ward some specific questions about parcel 014-1585.

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Partin calls the Regular Meeting to order

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

Prayer by Pastor Collier, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilor Pelham

Councilor Pelham makes a motion to adopt the agenda Councilor Holloway

seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

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

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

INFORMATION AND PRESENTATIONS

Made in Hopewell – Charles Bennett, Economic Development Director.

Director Charles Bennett opens his presentation to discuss an event coming up on Friday October 4th from 1:00 pm to 5:30pm called Made in Hopewell. He shared the event was shared on social media feeds, LinkedIn and others. Charles informed

council Made in Hopewell is a celebration of all things manufacturing, both big and small in Hopewell and Prince George area. He explained the goal is to generate awareness, pride and new connections around the community's advanced technical knowledge and locally made products to the uplift Hopewell and the region as leaders in this field. Charles explains Made in Hopewell has been organized and spearheaded by the Hopewell downtown partnership in, with support of the Virginia Main Street and the Virginia Department of small business supplier diversity. He informed council the event is a part of the overall strategy to continue the revitalization of historic Hopewell and the manufacturing base and entrepreneur ecosystem, improving the quality of life of the region. Charles invite council to the event sharing the time frame and stating it is for all members of the public. He gave the location at the American Legion Post 146 on Hopewell Street and City Point. He stated from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm there will be various panels and presentations, one of the presentations will be done jointly with Flether Magnum of Magnum Economics, who prepared an economic impact study on the power of the industries in Hopewell and the reach of that economic impact in the region. He shared other panels and others studies that will be discussed at the event. He informed council after the presentation they will be going back to the Beacon Theater for a small batch trade show from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm celebrating artist and craftsman who are in Hopewell making things that we may not be aware of having an opportunity to network. Charles shared a Crowds Choice Award would be given out in the form of a small business grant to help accelerate one of the entrepreneurs that are in the city. He ended his presentation with extending an invite to council to the event and sharing his excitement in making things in Hopewell and wants to celebrate that.

Councilor Denton shared that she got a call that WRVA and Heather Learnings from Hopewell Downton Partnership did a fantastic job talking about the event. Charles responded by sharing they are getting incredible media coverage through the media.

Councilor Holloway asked to be notified when an event is happening so the word can be spread. Charles responded with all the different forms of communication that was put out about the event.

Councilor Pelham asked to see if there was a way to inform all of the local churches in the city to be informed of the event sharing that is a big congregation of support in the community. Dr. Manker informed councilor Pelham that we've learned a lot of places may not have email addresses but we do have a list compiling all the churches together.

Storm Water utility fees study – Marshall Hartless, Deputy Director of Stormwater and Engineering.

Deputy Director Hartless starts his presentation informing council they will be discussing the storm water fee study that was conducted and introduced from CDM Smith, David Mason, who presented the study.

David Mason opened the presentation educating council with background of CDM Smith who is an environmental engineering consulting firm that does a lot of stormwater utility assessments around Virginia and the country. David reiterated the stormwater fee was implemented in June 2015 and council at the time thought it necessary to fund the program adequately and sustainably using the revenue stream. He shared at the time the fee was set up with \$4 equivalent residential unit charge and it has not been changed for 9 years. He noted at the time when the study was done it was recommended for an \$8 per month fee and it was implemented at \$4. He stated over time revenue that's generated from that fee has not really kept up with the pace of infrastructure renewal around town, keeping up with the flooding concerns. He stated there are some issues with collections so the revenue right now is not adequately funding the program and the purpose of the project was to look at what the needs of the program are today. Mr. Mason explained they need to review the rate structure in place in comparison to that, trends around the state and around the country, and offer some recommendation for improving the program. He reiterated the fee is at \$4 for homes and townhouses, non-residential customers pay a portion of that meaning if they are twice as big they pay \$8 and if they are 3 times as big they pay \$12. He informed council there is a credit offered for larger industrial users and that credit is at 90% causing an impact in revenue for the program which accounts for about \$400,000 in revenue reduction on an annual basis. He shared the annual revenue of the program is about \$900,000 a year and collections does impact that a little and reduces that. He showed council a table of the average cost of the program as of today. He explained to council the majority of the cost of the program is in the day-to-day operations and there is very little money left over to do capital projects for the next 5 years. He stated staff has identified \$13 million of capital improvement projects, of known flooding issues, Known needs in the community, as well as water quality needs. He showed council an example of the Chesapeake Bay line item on the slide and the regulatory requirement. David explained another need in the program that is not able to be funded in the future if the fee structure is not reevaluated. He shared there are about 30 other drainage projects that staff have given that they do

not have costs for. He went over a rate model explaining he would not go over the information because council had the packet but highlighted where the rates were today and what was originally recommended. David informed council they looked at some of the peer cities around the Richmond area and Southern Virginia to give them a framework of where Hopewell is compared to the others. He shared the average rate that everyone is charging is around \$7.75 per residential unit. He also discussed the average credit that is usually offered for these stormwater programs is about 24-25% and the peer cities is about 20% and the state law does require a credit system. He shared a table that would show the impact of the credit system and how it would affect the revenue when evaluating the credit program. David advised council they should be on the \$8 rate and explained how it would help catch up in a lot of ways for a lot of critical projects that are in place. He discussed the billing and collections side and shared there was a memo that went that explained collections issue and how others in the state bill their program. He explained they use the utility bill to collect on the fee and how the fee goes to the owner and not the tenant. Ending the presentation David showed the findings sharing to consider the \$8 fee that was originally recommended about 10 years ago and consider how that might benefit the program today and also reevaluating the credit policy and trying to structure it around something that's more consistent with how things are done throughout the state and Southern Virginia area.

Councilor Harris asked questions about how the original fee has maintained so far and if the city has been struggling. Deputy Director Hartless answered the question yes and explained they were not with the city during the original study. David also explained how years ago when the program is put in place they get them approved on a level below what is needed and they fall behind every year.

Councilor Pelham asked questions about the misleading fee average from across the state due to the grants from the government because they have a larger population. Pelham expressed she would not be inclined to put another fee on the citizens after they were given a 3% increase this year with assessments coming up in January.

Mayor Partin started off my sharing his support. He stated his opinion on the industrial credit and how he thinks it is extremely high and the citizens have had to shoulder that burden and he feels he hasn't had the support to lower it from an analysis. He shared when the program was first designed there was a flaw in the system and the infrastructure is paying for it. He expressed his support of the idea of lowering the industrial credit to about 20% just like the average for peer cities and state. He explained he would be in support of moving it over to the real estate

bill. He shared he would love to see what the fees would be on the real estate bills before the rate increase.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

1. Wendy Austin- Wendy wanted to speak to council about Paddle Battle and how it was a success. She shared there were 132 registrants and about 20 racers. She shared it was about 10 miles down the river in Petersburg and the finish line celebration was here in Hopewell. She stated it was a complex event to have but it was pulled off. Wendy shared it was a very positive experience working with all of the staff. They were very responsive and helpful. She shared names like Mr. Gaston, Ms. Holland, Mr. Bennett, Chief Rupert, and Ms. Martinez. Wendy shared more names of representatives who were helpful during the event. She expressed they will always have the finish line in Hopewell. She also shared all the attendees were thrilled to be at the marina and enjoyed the community up and down the river.
2. Karen Thayer- Karens starts of by sharing this is the first time she has been here. She explains she is here because of the raise in taxes. She also shared she has been a resident in Hopewell since 2004 and she objects to the raise in taxes. She explained there are a lot of individuals, not just in Hopewell, who are extremely struggling from day to day to put a decent meal on the table to feed their kids. They deal with process foods that make them sick and end having to see a doctor because of it and it causes a trickle-down effect. She stated that is just one issue with the raised taxes. She explained how bills are going up and they are asking each household to pay an extra \$100. She asked council how much more of our pockets are going to be taken before our pockets are literally empty. She expressed she does not know how to stand there as a disable person and a widow that doesn't have the money coming in except from the government. She stated she doesn't know how to ask or beg to not raise taxes, not just for her, but for every individual that's struggling. She stated to council to put themselves in her shoes and what they are facing. She shared her surprise that there was not more people here to share her frustration but stated they are probably not there

because their voices are not heard. Karen shared a story about helping out a local homeless man who had less than her but she still helped him by getting him something from the store. She shared you can tell he really needed the help. She ended her speech by sharing we need to do something about the crime too.

3. Mark Burroughs- Mark opens his speech by sharing he is from ward 3 and he has a couple things he would like to discuss. He shared there was a couple things that frustrated him, one being during the pledge of allegiance one of the city employees was standing in the back with his head in his hands, in his pockets, looking around not reciting the pledge. He shared he was veteran and he personally finds it offensive. He expressed he feels you can at least have respect for our nation to stand there and place your hand over your heart, even if you don't recite the pledge. He shared his second frustration with the last few times he has attended council meetings there has been at least one council member absent. He stated if you can not make it to the meetings as an elected official of the city, resign your position. He shared citizens deserve better, the city employees who they make decisions for, deserve better than council not being there. Mark stated when citizens come and voice their concerns council does what they want regardless of what citizens have to say. He stated they should be able to at least face citizens when they are voicing concerns.

PUBLIC HEARING

PH-1 – Zoning amendment request to add group homes as allowable use in B1 district – Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

Director Ward begins his presentation by letting council know that this request is to add group homes as an allowable use in the B1 district. He shows the PowerPoint to council and goes through the slides explaining the dimensions. B1 does not currently allow group homes and assisted living facilities as an allowable use. He mentions to council when you add a use to a district you are making it an allowable use throughout the entire district. He informs council that currently the zoning ordinance is in full compliance with state code as it relates to group homes and where they are permitted throughout the city. He then directs their attention to the map provided. He lets council know staff is recommending denial of this request. Planning commission recommends denial and their vote was 5-0. He then

lets council know how many group homes each ward currently has giving a total number of 29 group homes currently in the city of Hopewell. He opens the floor for questions of council.

Mayor Partin opens the floor for public comment.

Mr. Kevin speaks in regard to the public hearing states he doesn't have any objection he just received something in the mail and he thought it was voted down back in July. He mentions he actually was there to speak on the taxes not the public hearing. He mentions he has serious concerns about the taxes being a property owner since 2022 in the B1 district. The number of vacancies currently in B1 is alarming and then discusses surrounding counties and their businesses and taxes. He asks council if the county of Henrico and chesterfield can lower their tax rates, why does Hopewell have to raise theirs to keep up the same quality of services. He goes further into details about businesses in the Hopewell and the regulations that Hopewell currently has in place.

City Clerk mentions he is beyond his three minutes, council extends to allow him to finish.

He mentions the regulations are forcing business owners to just sit on these properties and do nothing with them because they can't. He said he can't understand half of the stuff that's in the ordinance.

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to uphold the recommendation of the planning commission and I recommend denial of the request to add group homes and assisted living facilities in the B1 district. Councilor Harris seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 5-1

REGULAR BUSINESS

R-1 - Adoption of finance policies- Stacey Jordan, Finance Director (CFO)

Ms. Jordan lets council know that in July, Sept, and August these draft policies were presented to them as well as residents of Hopewell. She explains to council the objectives are to contribute to the city's ability to insulate itself from fiscal crisis, enhance short-term and long-term financial credit of the city, promote long term financial stability, direct attention to the total financial picture of the city, link long term financial planning with day-to-day operations and provide a framework for measuring the fiscal impact of government services against established fiscal parameters. She tells council the policies will consist of a budget policy, capital improvement policy, a debt policy, reserves policy, expenditure policy, utilities, investment, as well as procurement.

Dr. Manker lets the mayor know they need to extend the meeting.

Councilor Joyner makes the motion to extend the meeting until completion of R2, Councilor Pelham seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 5-0

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to adopt the financial polices as presented, Mayor Partin seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 5-0

R-2 – School division supplemental appropriation – Janelle English- Finance Director for schools.

The Ms. English began speaking to council letting them know she is there to ask them for approval of two adjustments to their budget. The first part of the school board’s request is to have city council approve their amended budget. She lets council know they originally approved the budget back in May and then in June they had to amend the budget so she is now coming back so they can sync up the two budgets. She goes on to say the second part is a supplemental appropriation. She mentions the school board approved a supplemental appropriation, the amount of \$212,680 and this was for the school security officer grant as well as the school safety and security grant. She lets council know these are both federal and state funds that they would be adding to their budget. She ends her presentation by telling council their school board requests are for council to approve the school board’s amended FY 25 budget, as well as their supplemental appropriation.

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to adopt the school division’s supplemental appropriation as presented, Mayor Partin seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 5-0

Closing Comments:

Councilor Holloway: Councilor Holloway mentions respectfully that there were comments in regard to councilors taking absence, he mentions they are only not there when they can't be, they also have families that do have to be taken care that are also citizens of this city and he loves the city so much.

Councilor Pelham: Reminds everyone to vote!

Councilor Denton: She mentions the upcoming event that is next weekend and she is glad the paddle battle was a success.

Councilor Joyner: She says if you can get out and attend the October 4th event. She also lets council and audience know that the executive director of Hopewell Downtown Partnership will be leaving and they should recognize her and would like to do something a little bit more forma before she leaves to thank her.

Mayor Partin: Make sure you come out for the made in Hopewell event and kudos to the great first rivers and roads events. He was also excited to hear paddle battle was a success. He ends it with a special thanks to Charles for turning the Marina around.

Councilor Joyner makes a motion to adjourn.

Yes: 5

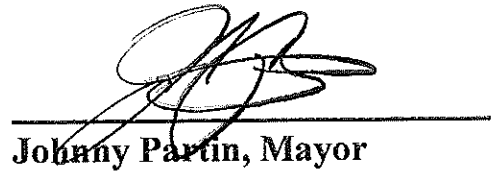
No: 0

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brittani Williams", written over a horizontal line.

Brittani Williams, City Clerk

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Johnny Partin", written over a horizontal line.

Johnny Partin, Mayor