

**City of New Bern
Board of Aldermen Special Meeting
April 4, 2019 – 1:00 P.M.
City Hall Courtroom
300 Pollock Street**

Mayor Outlaw opened the meeting with prayer. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: Mayor Dana Outlaw; Aldermen Sabrina Bengel, Jameesha Harris, Johnnie Ray Kinsey (arrived at 1:02 p.m.), and Barbara Best. Absent: Aldermen Robert Aster and Jeffrey Odham. A quorum was present.

Also in Attendance: Mark Stephens, City Manager, and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to allow anyone in the audience to ask questions if they desired, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Mayor Outlaw and other members of the Board thanked Dawn Zimmer, Former Mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey, for taking time to travel to New Bern to offer assistance and share from her experience.

Mayor Outlaw opened the floor to the public. No one came forward to speak.

1. Presentation on Resiliency from Dawn Zimmer, Former Mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey.

Mayor Zimmer thanked the Board for inviting her. Some of the topics she discussed were:

- Explore the option of obtaining natural gas backup generators to help operate cellphone towers, etc.; FEMA funding may be available for this.
- Displaced residents and housing shortage; Habitat for Humanity has expressed a desire for a partnership to build some type of temporary housing.
- Misunderstandings about standards for rebuilding and concerns about consequences for failing to rebuild according to those standards.

Alderman Bengel asked if there should be one staff member to handle mitigation issues or whether an existing position should be tasked with that duty. Mayor Zimmer said that question was one for New Bern's governing board and administration to determine. In her experience, she found value in having a community process where residents felt they were being heard. Hearing everyone's ideas allows for the best designs, although it takes a lot of time to facilitate that dialogue. It is important to have the community's support in order to move forward.

Mayor Outlaw noted at last night's forum, Mayor Zimmer commented that Hoboken added a Resiliency Officer and Chief Sustainability Officer. He pointed out the substantial difference between Hoboken and New Bern's size, population and budget. Mayor Zimmer said it seemed as if New Bern had a terrific opportunity with the establishment of the Redevelopment Commission, which may help with some of the affordable housing issues. A challenge the City faces is the number of homes that may have been abandoned because of sustained damages.

Mayor Zimmer reflected upon grants received by Hoboken. Community Development Block Grant funds were used to rebuild some City buildings. By means of a competition, a grant was received from The Rockefeller Foundation, which was used to develop a rebuild design. There appears to be an opportunity to live around the water and build in a different manner that will keep people and things safe. Hoboken also adopted a flood-prevention ordinance that required utility outlets be raised and that the first floor of buildings could not be used as living quarters, but could be used as a community or commercial space. Homes were constructed utilizing flood-resistant materials, which provides for a faster recovery.

Mayor Zimmer said part of the reason Hoboken won the design competition was because it partnered with two adjacent cities. She expressed support of the idea to work with other towns or the County to bring together people of different backgrounds who could analyze the needs.

Mr. Stephens felt there was a possibility for using the natural contours of the land to help mitigate some issues. However, he cautioned the issue would remain in the downtown area. He suggested utilizing or expanding existing pumps and installing flapper valves to cut off some of the open-channel flows. Mr. Stephens pointed out the cost of making those changes would not be cheap. Mayor Zimmer said Hoboken's funding for the resiliency parks came from a 2 cent tax increase that passed by referendum, which was complimented with grant funding. She pointed out green space and parks were much cheaper than adding pumps. Mayor Zimmer questioned whether a partnership could be formed with a university in the state or region to prepare a flood model and look at options.

To speed up FEMA reimbursements, Hoboken hired someone who was good at working through the paperwork. The rebuild-by-design process required all levels of government to work together. That funding was awarded to the State, which required Hoboken to work with the State.

Alderwoman Harris asked how Hoboken addressed the mental impact from the storm. Mayor Zimmer stated Hoboken did similar things as New Bern: worked to get the debris out quickly and moved forward with scheduled community events.

(Alderman Kinsey momentarily stepped out of the room at 1:53 p.m.)

Additionally, a nonprofit offered mental counseling and support, which the City promoted, but did not offer itself.

Most citizens handled their own rebuild with the assistance of volunteer groups. With respect to government-owned damaged buildings, Hoboken sought FEMA assistance, but Mayor Zimmer believed the City obtained a bond to cover the costs to begin the rebuild and repair, and then obtained reimbursement from FEMA.

On behalf of the CARE group, Nelson McDaniel thanked Mayor Zimmer for agreeing to visit New Bern. He noted Hoboken and New Bern both share the common factor of water. While the governments are different, there may be similar efficiencies or advantages available to both. He commented relief is not recovery, and recovery is not resiliency. It is important for planning to take place on a regional level.

(Alderman Kinsey returned to the room at 2:04 p.m.)

Regarding mental health, Lorelei Schaffhausen of 511 Metcalf Street announced she is part of the Craven County Disaster Recovery Alliance and Chair of the Emotional and Spiritual Care Committee. She stated the group is partnering with Trillium to offer mental and first-aid training for lay people. She suggested an event be held on the one-year anniversary of the hurricane to allow people to share their stories.


In closure, the Mayor and Members of the Board presented Mayor Zimmer with a key to the City of New Bern, a challenge coin, and a City lapel pin.


2. **Adjourn.**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously, time being 2:14 p.m.

NOTE: For additional details and information on the Board of Aldermen meetings, please visit the City of New Bern's website at www.newbernnc.gov. Video and audio recordings of the meeting have been archived.

Minutes approved: April 23, 2019


Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor


Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk