

**City of New Bern
Board of Aldermen Meeting
July 13, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
City Hall Courtroom
300 Pollock Street**

- 1. Meeting opened by Mayor Dana E. Outlaw. Prayer by Zeb Hough, Executive Director of Religious Community Services. Pledge of Allegiance.**
- 2. Roll Call.**

Present: Mayor Dana Outlaw, Alderman Sabrina Bengel, Alderwoman Jameesha Harris (arrived 6:04 p.m.), Alderman Barbara Best, Alderman Johnnie Ray Kinsey, and Alderman Jeffrey Odham. Absent: Alderman Robert Aster. A quorum was present.

Also Present: Foster Hughes, Interim City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney; Jaime Bullock-Mosley, Assistant City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

- 3. Dedication of Courtroom and Brief Reception.**

Mayor Outlaw reflected upon his family's arrival to New Bern in 1968 and the people he met. One of his classmates in high school was Michael Morgan, who is now a NC Superior Court Justice.

(Alderman Kinsey momentarily stepped out of the room at 6:03 p.m.)

Mayor Outlaw also reflected upon Justice Morgan's father, Leander Morgan, who later became the first African American Mayor of New Bern. Mayor Morgan instantaneously exhibited leadership skills in the midst of childish behavior by other adults. He had the ability to calm the City while displaying a sense of reasonableness and respect.

(Alderman Kinsey returned to the room at 6:04 p.m.)

Mayor Outlaw also reflected upon Ella Bengel, who was the first female Mayor of New Bern, noting her work to improve the recreational opportunities in New Bern.

Alderman Bengel welcomed everyone to the newly renovated courtroom and second floor offices. She read a statement about the renovation process to repair years of decay and Hurricane Florence damage sustained by New Bern's historical City Hall landmark. A PowerPoint was shared to display the architectural features of the building, as well as before and after photos of the renovation. Alderman Bengel paid tribute to Kathleen Orringer, the first female alderman, and Barbara Lee, the first black female alderman, to serve the City. Pictures of both women have been put on display in the Board's second-floor meeting room. Portraits of

Mayor Leander Morgan and Mayor Ella Bengel, displayed on the wall behind the dais, were officially dedicated as part of the presentation.

Justice Morgan provided comments on behalf of the Morgan family, stressing how much his father loved New Bern and serving people. Steve Bengel, Mayor Bengel's son, then provided comments on behalf of the Bengel family, noting his mother's devotion to God and her faith, and her endeavor to be led by that faith when making decisions.

Alderman Bengel made a motion to recess for a reception, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 6-0, time being 6:34 p.m. The meeting resumed at 6:53 p.m.

4. Request and Petition of Citizens.

Sandra Arasim of 100 7th Street, an Infant Toddler Specialist with Craven Smart Start, shared a PowerPoint presentation to advocate for childhood education.

Margo Fesperman of 516 Craven Street complimented the City for sidewalk repairs. She stated the crews were pleasurable and polite.

Ramona Green, an entrepreneur and educator who lives at 201 Shipman Road, Havelock, petitioned the Board for a commissary kitchen. As the operator of a hotdog cart, she described the difficulties of securing kitchen space to prep and store food items. She stressed the need for the City to reignite the discussion and provide a commissary kitchen. Ms. Green stated there were other upcoming entrepreneurs who will also need this service.

Barbara Sampson of 480 W. NC Highway 55 said it was an honor to attend the ceremony dedicating the courtroom and recognizing Mayors Morgan and Bengel. She spoke on the need for diversity in the City's workplace. She suggested the Board visit the areas of Craven Terrace, Pleasant Hill, and Duffyfield and that they attend meetings held by the People's Assembly. Alderman Bengel asked for a schedule of the meetings.

Consent Agenda

5. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Close Monroe Drive for a Town Hall Meeting.

Alderwoman Harris requested a portion of the 3100 block of Monroe Drive be closed for a Town Hall meeting on July 18, 2021 from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. The area to be closed is in front of the residences at 3102, 3103, 3104, 3105, 3107, 3109 and 3111 Monroe Drive.

6. Approve Minutes.

Draft minutes from the June 15, 2021 work session and June 22, 2021 regular meeting were provided for review and approval.

Alderman Best made a motion to approve Items 5-6 of the Consent Agenda, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

7. Presentation on Pembroke Infrastructure.

As requested by Alderwoman Harris, George Chiles, Interim Director of Public Works, shared a presentation to review infrastructure maintenance planned for FY21-22 within the Pembroke neighborhood. The PowerPoint reviewed the roadways and sidewalks.

4. Request and Petition of Citizens (continued)

Mayor Outlaw called forth Marleigh Ferguson of 205 Longleaf Drive who was overlooked under Request and Petition of Citizens. Ms. Ferguson, a cake decorator and baker, spoke in support of a commissary kitchen. She addressed the struggles and spoke of the peace of mind and cost savings that would be recognized by her and others who are in the food industry.

8. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving the Donation of the Structure Located at 602 Gaston Boulevard to the Redevelopment Commission.

At its February 10, 2021 meeting, the Redevelopment Commission endorsed exploring the feasibility of moving the residential structure located at 602 Gaston Boulevard to 911 Eubanks Street, which is a vacant lot owned by the Commission. The cost to move and rehabilitate the structure was estimated at \$115,128. The Commission has \$232,052 available for rehabilitation through the approved CDBG plan. At its June 9, 2021 meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to accept ownership of the structure with the purpose of rehabbing it into affordable housing within the redevelopment area. As directed in a resolution adopted by the Board of Aldermen on June 22, 2021, the City Clerk properly noticed on the City's website the Board's intent to convey the structure.

Alderman Odham made a motion to adopt a resolution approving the donation of the structure located at 602 Gaston Boulevard to the Redevelopment Commission, seconded by Alderman Bengel. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

9. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving a Grant from the NC Governor's Highway Safety Program.

In 2020, the New Bern Police Department took the position of Law Enforcement Liaison for region 2. In part, the liaison coordinates and organizes highway safety activities and works with participating agencies in the region to coordinate safety-related traffic events. The position also hosts quarterly meetings, works closely with the Governor's Highway Safety Program ("GHSP") to determine what equipment is made available to agencies in the state, and assists GHSP with events such as conferences, campaign kick-offs, and the state fair. The position comes with a \$25,000 grant, which requires no match. The grant will cover all expenses for travel, training, and equipment related to the position.

Alderman Kinsey inquired about the type of training and programs the grant would provide for officers. Police Chief Gallagher reiterated Mr. Hughes' statement that the grant would focus only on traffic-related incidents and would not impact criminology. Alderwoman Harris announced she had met with Chief Gallagher and learned about some of the programs. She thanked him for the work he had done since joining the City of New Bern Police Department.

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt a resolution approving a grant from the NC Governor's Highway Safety Program, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

10. Consider Adopting a Resolution Authorizing the Addition of Streetlights on Stimpson Street.

Mrs. Simmons of 2306 Stimpson Street requested additional streetlighting on Stimpson Street. The area was evaluated and determined to not meet the City's light standard. Staff has recommended two streetlights be installed at an estimated cost of \$1,063.80. The monthly utility charge to be paid by Public Works will be \$16.88.

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the addition of streetlights on Stimpson Street, seconded by Alderman Bengel. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

11. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving an Agreement with NC Railroad Company to Extend the License Agreement for the Union Station Train Depot.

The City previously entered into a license agreement with NC Railroad ("NCRR") for the purpose of rehabilitating the Union Station Train Depot. That agreement expired on July 1, 2021, and it was proposed the agreement be extended until December 31, 2021. New Bern Preservation Foundation has made progress in the preservation and rehabilitation of the structure, and an extension will allow more time to pursue those efforts.

Mayor Outlaw thanked Mr. Hughes, Alderman Bengel, and Alderman Odham for making a trip to Raleigh to meet with NCRR to discuss this and other items. Alderman Bengel questioned why the agreement was only for one year, and Mr. Davis stated that was the proposal by NCRR. Alderman Bengel provided a history of the lease and the terms prohibiting the rental of the building until the entire building was fully restored. She noted a portion of the first floor had been beautifully restored. If that area could be rented, the Preservation Foundation could raise funds to restore the remainder of the building. Mr. Foster clarified that the extension was only for six months, and the goal is to establish a more permanent solution within that timeframe.

Alderman Bengel made a motion to adopt a resolution approving an agreement with NC Railroad Company to extend the license agreement for the Union Station Train Depot, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

12. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Approve an Agreement for Purchase and Sale of Real Property with the NC Railroad Company.

This item authorizes the Mayor to execute an agreement of purchase and sale of real property with NCRR for a parcel located at the intersection of South Front and Hancock Streets. The property is identified as tax parcel ID 8-001-C-071, and the purchase price is \$227,000.

Alderman Bengel made a motion to adopt a resolution to approve an agreement for purchase and sale of real property with the NC Railroad Company, seconded by Alderman Odham. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

13. Consider Adopting a Resolution Designating Deputy Finance Officers.

NCGS 159-28 requires that all obligations be pre-audited to ensure there is sufficient budget to pay the sums obligated. The preaudit is performed by the finance officer (Director) or a deputy finance officer who has been designated by the Board. Any contract, agreement, or purchase order that is not pre-audited is invalid and may not be enforced. Lori Mullican, Accounting Manager, was previously named as a deputy finance officer. She is now retired, and the proposed resolution will name the current Accounting Manager, Kimberly Ostrom, and the Senior Accountant, Tanya Harms, as deputy finance officers. Of note, Sonya Hayes, Director of Human Resources, was named a deputy finance officer in 2014 for the purpose of pre-auditing salary changes and new hire salary and wage arrangements. Mrs. Hayes will remain a designee for that purpose.

Alderman Odham made a motion to adopt a resolution designating deputy finance officers, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

14. Appointment(s).

Alderman Odham made a motion to appoint John Blackwater to the Historic Preservation Commission, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 6-0. Mr. Blackwater will fill seat 6 previously occupied by George Brake. His three-year term will expire on June 30, 2024.

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to appoint Isaiah Daniels to the Police Civil Service Board, seconded by Alderman Odham. The motion carried unanimously 6-0. Mr. Daniels will serve a two-year term to expire on June 30, 2023.

15. Attorney's Report.

The City Attorney had nothing to report.

16. City Manager's Report.

Mr. Hughes announced Eric Glenn, an Inventory Control Clerk, passed away over the weekend. Mr. Glenn worked with the City for a little over two years.

17. New Business.

Alderman Odham

The New Bern Police Department issued a press release about golf carts and their legality on city streets. Wards 3 and 6 are the only two wards with residential golfing communities. The City Attorney can draft an ordinance to allow golf carts to legally operate on the streets in those two communities. This will be presented on a future agenda.

Thoughts or suggestions were sought on identifying citywide streetlights that are out, whether they are city-owned or Duke-owned. Mr. Hughes confirmed the ability for citizens to report outages through the City's website.

Alderman Best

The public was asked to encourage children not to jump into the waterways because of the risk of alligators.

Dr. Statts made a presentation on April 13, 2021 about the commercial kitchen and Craven Community College ("CCC") leasing the entire campus of the VOLT Center. The lease has not yet been presented to the Board for consideration. Alderman Best encouraged the Board to dive deeper into that conversation, noting the two ladies who spoke under Request and Petition of Citizens about the dire need of a commissary kitchen. Lists of stakeholders and potential grant opportunities to upfit the kitchen was distributed by Alderman Best. She also indicated CarolinaEast had shown a willingness to partner on the project. Alderman Bengel asked Margaret Shields, Grant Writer with Fund Development, LLC, to update her list of stakeholders, as Alderman Bengel's name was not included on the list, yet she had attended the meetings. Alderwoman Harris spoke in favor of the commissary kitchen and the importance of providing that asset to small entrepreneurs.

Alderman Kinsey

Alderman Kinsey asked what could be done to get the ball rolling on the commissary kitchen. Prior to that question being considered, Alderman Odham asked who established the requirement of the commissary kitchen for food truck operations. Alderman Bengel responded the Health Department. Ramona Green, who spoke under Request and Petition of Citizens, explained it was a county and state requirement, and she described the process. Alderman Odham then asked if support had been sought from the county commissioners, to which Ms. Green responded it could be. Alderman Odham then asked if the commissary kitchen had to be located at the VOLT Center. Ms. Green said from a space standpoint, the VOLT Center was ideal because of the need for a dry space and a cold space. Existing commercial kitchens are too small for modification to accommodate outside food vendors. Alderman Odham asked about the feasibility of upfitting the train depot with a commissary kitchen. Alderman Kinsey suggested a meeting with the county commissioners, to which Alderwoman Harris respectfully disagreed and stated the City needed to provide the service. Alderwoman Harris felt a motion needed to be made tonight to allow staff to proceed with the grants and pursue the original plan.

Rev. Gregory Holmes, a spectator in the audience, approached the podium desiring to comment. Since Ms. Green was allowed to speak, Mayor Outlaw asked if the Board wanted to open the forum to others. Before belaboring the discussion, however, he suggested an ad hoc group of three aldermen be formed to discuss the matter and report back to the Board.

Alderman Best made a motion to allow other citizens to speak before the Board, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Alderman Bengel said she would prefer a work session where everyone was prepared with questions and more information, and others would have an opportunity to be notified and participate. Alderwoman Harris disagreed, stating that opportunity was not afforded on April 13th when Alderman Bengel had Dr. Staats make a proposal and the topic was presented before the Board without prior information. Alderwoman Harris asked why there was always a necessity to perform research when it involved people in their community. The motion to allow other citizens to speak carried 4-2 with Aldermen Odham and Bengel voting against it.

Rev. Holmes of First Missionary Baptist Church said he had been working with Jeff Ruggieri, Director of Development Services, to build an incubator for youth training. A structure had been torn down to make room for the building office space and storefronts. Grant funds will be sought to assist the youth with starting their businesses.

James Woods of 1903 Country Club Road asked Mr. Davis to confirm that Dr. Staat's proposal on April 13th indicated the college would not allow entrepreneurs to utilize the facility. Mr. Davis did not recall the specifics. Mr. Woods then asked if the Board could rescind its earlier decision to enter into a contract with CCC, and Mr. Davis confirmed it could. Mr. Woods cautioned that the City would be treading on thin ice if it went against its word. He then suggested the old Ghent Sandwich

Shop be converted into a commissary kitchen, noting it would be beneficial to the Duffyfield community. The building could be retrofitted and moved to the VOLT Center site, if desired, which would satisfy both CCC and the citizens. Mr. Woods commented that the Board needed to stop bickering amongst itself and get something done. He suggested the American Rescue Plan ("ARP") funds be used to move and modify the Ghent Sandwich Shop. When Alderman Bengel pointed out the ARP funds could not be used for that purpose, Mr. Woods suggested moving money around to make it happen. He again cautioned the City about going against its word to move forward with CCC.

While she appreciated his comments, Alderwoman Harris stated there were countless meetings in prior years where stakeholders had expressed a desire for a commissary kitchen at the VOLT Center. She reminded Mr. Woods the Board had not signed a contract with CCC and had only made a motion to allow the City to work out the details of a lease. She recounted her vote against that motion and reiterated the lease had not yet been presented to the Board. Alderman Best said she did not want the matter to be an argument, but the project had been talked about for some time and needed to move forward. Although, she was not in favor of breaking her word with an institution of higher learning that could benefit her and the citizens.

Alderman Best asked Mr. Ruggieri if the City had had any conversations with CCC since April 13, 2021. Mr. Ruggieri said the only engagement since that meeting had been a review of the lease, which was an editation of the master lease for the VOLT Center. Alderman Best asked Mr. Ruggieri for his opinion on the commissary kitchen being located some place other than the VOLT Center, to which he replied the kitchen was the synergy of the siteworks. Locating the kitchen in that area would provide the most opportunity for entrepreneur success. The initial basis of the entire program was to position entrepreneurs and those who wanted to get an education and develop skills. The VOLT Center location is one of the best for such a program; it is a very visible area. The center was built for a kitchen, and the site is just waiting for installation of the kitchen equipment. It would be easier to get a kitchen at this location than somewhere else.

Mayor Outlaw said there were a lot of questions as to how the commissary kitchen would work, and Alderman Best said everything had been established. Alderman Bengel said she had read the concept and information submitted in the original grant, but the question had always been how the facility would be managed and what rules would exist. She did not think the final details had been laid out or put in place. Alderwoman Harris asked how hard it would be to pull the details together on who would maintain and manage the kitchen. Mr. Ruggieri said Amanda Ohlensehlen, Community & Economic Development Manager, was very familiar with operating and managing such a facility, which she did in Havelock for 7-8 years. Little Washington is also going through the same process, is a little further along, and has secured \$445,000 in grants. Mr. Ruggieri said he would rely on Mrs. Ohlensehlen's expertise and would reach out to Washington for input, but essentially it was a matter of scheduling. The college could run on some days and a commissary operate on other days.

Alderwoman Harris expressed passion for the commissary kitchen, stating it was vital. She stated the Board needed to remove the politics and do what was right, which would be to move forward by allowing Development Services to do their job and allowing the grant writer to secure grants. She pointed out the City had enough fund balance that it could write the check to upfit the kitchen. Alderman Best noted the facility would not only be used by entrepreneurs, but also food service workers such as those at CarolinaEast who need to maintain their skills and certifications. Mayor Outlaw asked Alderman Best if she had spoken with CCC, and she replied she had not as she did not think she needed to at this point and she also felt Development Services would pursue those discussions.

Alderman Odham asked why the kitchen had not yet been set up at the VOLT Center. Mr. Ruggieri responded it was because the City did not have full funding, although it was sitting on \$70,000 in grant funds. COVID hindered some of the other grant opportunities that were to be pursued. Additionally, the City was partnering with CCC to apply for a grant, but CCC pulled out of the partnership, which Mr. Ruggieri stated he now understood why. Mrs. Shields said the grants detailed on the list distributed by Alderman Best were not new, but had been opportunities all along. Some of the grants required the City to partner with others. As Mr. Ruggieri noted, the City was applying for a Golden Leaf grant, but CCC did not timely provide updated information on the cost of the kitchen equipment. Without the updated budget, the grant application could not be submitted.

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to allow Mr. Ruggieri, Mrs. Ohlensehlen, Development Services and Mrs. Shields an opportunity to move forward with grants and partnerships to upfit the VOLT Center with a commercial kitchen and to have a conversation with CCC to see if they would still like to offer education in the space, seconded by Alderman Best. Alderwoman Harris said she felt the City should move forward with running the kitchen considering it has grant opportunities to upfit it. Alderman Best concurred, noting Development Services was trying to identify grant funding prior to COVID, and the establishment of a commissary kitchen was part of the initial plan. Mayor Outlaw said while he really wanted to support the matter, he did not feel there was enough information for him to support the motion. He expressed some of his concerns and felt there would be a greater resource opportunity by partnering with CCC. Alderwoman Harris said she and the community were only asking for an opportunity to show that the commissary kitchen would be successful. After additional comments from the Mayor, Alderwoman Harris called the motion. Realizing Alderman Odham had additional questions, Aldermen Harris and Best withdrew their motion and second so discussion could continue.

Alderman Odham asked when the VOLT Center project was started and funding sought for the kitchen aspect. Mr. Ruggieri said the project began in 2014 and funding for the kitchen was sought in 2017. The center was built always knowing that there would be a kitchen. Hurricane Florence and COVID stopped staff from pursuing grants, although several organizations expressed support. Alderman Odham asked how many potential vendors and entrepreneurs would want to use

the facility. Mr. Ruggieri responded at one time, the list of people who had walked in off the street to express interest was 5, but he would have to check his notes. The kitchen was part of a larger picture for a vendor market area. Alderman Kinsey asked when the game plan changed, and Mr. Ruggieri said April 13th was when he was first aware of a change in plans. Although CCC utilizes space at a lot of places, Mr. Ruggieri did not know the answer as to whether they would willingly partner to use the kitchen a couple of days a week.

Mayor Outlaw asked who would pick up the revenue stream when the grants ran out. Alderwoman Harris said she was going to think positively that entrepreneurs would come, and they would be charged to use the facility. She and Alderman Best said Mr. Ruggieri and his staff needed an opportunity to develop a plan. Alderman Bengel said she would be voting no to the motion because she felt more discussion was needed with everyone at the table. Alderwoman Harris said they never get that opportunity and were not given that opportunity on April 13th.

(Ms. Green left the meeting heckling on her way out that the Board was failing its people.)

Alderwoman Harris said Mr. Ruggieri had confirmed that the game plan had changed. There were things that happened behind closed doors, and Alderwoman Harris said has spoken about the need to be transparent. There are no conversations that need to be had. At the end of the day, the Board does not always have to research and have conversations and meetings on top of meetings to do the right thing. She reiterated the full Board was not afforded those benefits on April 13th when Dr. Staats presented a plan for the whole VOLT Center. That was not fair to the rest of the Board or to the citizens who went to stakeholder meetings. Alderwoman Harris remarked there was a need to remove politics and do the right thing.

Alderman Best said she was blown away when Dr. Staats made the presentation on April 13th. She voiced frustration with the Board and felt like the Board had a problem with black and brown people. She questioned why the Board would not want to vote yes to allow staff to move forward and talk with the college. She stated she was tired of the Board's racial tension, and it was time for the citizens to hear that. The list of grant opportunities reflects a win-win situation with partnerships between the City, CCC, and the hospital.

Alderman Odham asked Mrs. Shields when she asked CarolinaEast to support the project if the hospital was aware it would be for a for-profit entity. Mrs. Shields said she spoke with Lesley Hunter about the hospital's interest in utilizing the kitchen for training. Alderman Odham noted the topic had never gone before CarolinaEast's board, and he did not understand why they would consider supporting a for-profit entity. Alderman Odham said he wished the passion for this issue had been displayed four years ago instead of now when an agreement had already been made with CCC. He also asked why the City had not signed a lease with CCC. Mr. Hughes replied the City was still waiting for the Economic Development Administration ("EDA") to review and approve the change order.

Upon a roll-call vote, the motion on the floor failed with a 3-3 tie vote. Aldermen Best, Kinsey and Harris voted in favor of it, with Mayor Outlaw, Aldermen Bengel and Odham voting against it.

Alderman Bengel made an alternate motion that an agenda item be made and all parties are present such as CCC, Mr. Ruggieri, etc. Alderwoman Harris again asked why the Board was not afforded that opportunity on April 13th. Alderman Bengel said she was sorry to say in public, but Alderwoman Harris needed to talk with former City Manager, Mark Stephens, as he was well aware of it and had a full report, and it was not her problem that he did not share that information prior to the April 13th meeting. Alderman Bengel said she was offended by Alderman Best's comments, as she cares about every citizen in the community. Alderman Bengel then said she was trying to put forth an olive branch to keep the conversation going and to find a resolution.

Alderman Kinsey asked if the grant providers on the list were aware that the kitchen would be used by for-profit entities. Mrs. Shields confirmed they were aware and that they were willing to support the endeavor since it supports entrepreneurship.

Alderwoman Harris said she appreciated what Alderman Bengel said, although she disliked having meetings just to have meetings. She recalled previous meetings on the opportunity to obtain the NC Tobacco Trust fund grant, and the things that were done to take that grant away. She stated she did not want to get caught up in the politics again. If Alderman Bengel was agreeing to have everyone come to the table and the end result would be a commercial kitchen with a for-profit opportunity for entrepreneurs, then Alderwoman Harris stated she would second Alderman Bengel's motion. Alderman Bengel stated she wanted facts and wanted to know if the everyday person/entrepreneur could afford the cost of utilizing the kitchen. She expressed concern about who would run the kitchen. The idea behind outsourcing the kitchen and letting CCC operate it was that the City would not be laden with employees, insurance, and other issues that would arise. Alderman Bengel reiterated her desire to put out an olive branch, instead of walking away from the conversation and saying it was a dead issue. Alderwoman Harris said the olive branch should have been extended before April 13th. Reiterating her passion for the project, Alderwoman Harris said she would second the motion that one key person from each organization would come forward.

Mayor Outlaw asked the City Clerk to restate the motion on the floor. Mrs. Blanco stated the original motion was for an agenda item to be presented before the Board with all parties present, such as CCC, Mr. Ruggieri, Development Services. Mrs. Blanco asked Alderman Bengel if she was amending her motion to have the topic before a working group instead of the entire Board. Alderman Bengel then reworded her motion to state a working group would meet instead of having an agenda item before the Board. The working group could report to the Board.

Alderman Odham asked why the endeavor only focused on a commercial kitchen instead of other entrepreneur's ideas.

(Alderman Kinsey momentarily stepped out of the room at 8:57 p.m.)

He posed the possibility of other entrepreneurs questioning why the City would not subsidize their businesses, and he referred to the City and County's entrepreneur center that failed because it was not utilized. Alderwoman Harris declared it failed because of politics and a poor location.

Mayor Outlaw requested a roll call vote of the motion on the floor. Prior to the vote, Mrs. Blanco confirmed with Alderwoman Harris her willingness to second the reworded motion. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 6-0. Of note, Alderman Kinsey had momentarily stepped out of the room, thus technically yielding a vote in the affirmative.

Alderwoman Harris

Excitement was expressed about the local article regarding affirmative action. Alderwoman Harris reiterated her desire for a diversity equity inclusion officer and asked that another working group be formed to discuss the topic.

(Alderman Kinsey returned to the room at 9:00 p.m.)

Alderwoman Harris said she too had a strong concern about things within the City as referenced by Alderman Best. While the best candidates need to be hired, minorities need to be sought out and given an opportunity. At Alderman Odham's suggestion, the Board requested Sonya Hayes, Director of Human Resources, make a presentation at the next meeting to review the City's policy and describe what it does to recruit employees.

Alderwoman Harris announced this would be her last in-person meeting for a couple of months, as she has one more surgery to undergo. It was her hope that she would return in person by the last meeting in October. Until then, she will participate by phone. If there are any community meetings she cannot attend, she will have someone there to represent her.

Alderman Bengel

When the NC Department of Transportation ("DOT") mowed last week, they mowed over the trash. Mr. Hughes reached out to DOT about the trash and was told they did not have the money to clean it up.

(Alderman Best temporarily stepped out of the room at 9:09 p.m.)

Gratitude was expressed to the Departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation for picking up the trash. Alderman Bengel stated she had contacted Representative Steve Tyson, who will send a message to DOT.

There has been a problem all evening with Facebook Live. The technology in the courtroom is a new set up, and staff is working through the kinks. The meeting has been fully recorded, and all comments can be seen on the City's website or CityTV3.

Alderman Kinsey

Mr. Hughes was asked to provide an update on Stanley White Recreation Center, to which he responded the process has been in the environmental assessment stage with FEMA for months. As recently as last Friday, FEMA requested an update from the City. FEMA also indicated last week that they are ready to schedule a public input meeting. The date discussed was July 29th at 7 pm at the Omega Center. The City is waiting for FEMA to confirm that date and time. It will be FEMA's responsibility to advertise the information since it is their meeting. During the meeting, FEMA will make a presentation and take citizen comments.

18. Closed Session.

Alderman Odham made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel matter, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 6-0, time being 9:12 p.m.

Open Session

Mr. Davis announced Mrs. Hayes had expressed concern that she could not have a presentation on the equal opportunity policy and recruitment practices by the agenda deadline. He asked if the presentation could be delayed until the first meeting in August. After a little discussion, it was decided to move forward with the presentation on July 27th.

Alderman Odham made a motion to appoint Kimberly Ostrom, Accounting Manager, as the Interim Director of Finance, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously 6-0. Direction was given to the Interim City Manager to collect compensation data for those serving in this capacity on an interim basis. He was also given direction to begin the process to recruit for the position of Director of Finance.


19. Adjourn.

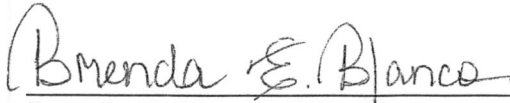
Alderman Bengel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 6-0, time being 9:28 p.m.

The attached documents are incorporated herewith and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

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: July 27, 2021



Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor

Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk