

**CITY OF NEW BERN
BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEETING
MAY 09, 2023 – 6:00 P.M.
CITY HALL COURTROOM
300 POLLOCK STREET**

1. **Meeting opened by Mayor Jeffrey Odham. Prayer by Alderman Royal. Pledge of Allegiance.**

2. **Roll Call.**

Present: Mayor Jeffrey Odham, Alderman Rick Prill, Alderman Hazel Royal, Alderman Robert Aster, Alderman Johnnie Ray Kinsey, Alderman Barbara Best, and Alderman Robert Brinson. Absent: None. A quorum was present.

Also Present: Foster Hughes, City Manager; Marvin Williams, Assistant City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

3. **Approve Agenda**

Alderman Royal made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

4. **Request and Petition of Citizens.**

David Hooker of 249 Craven Street, managing partner of Stanley Hall Ballroom, said he represented himself, Danny Strange, and Joyce Price of Rivertown Ballroom when speaking about parking and street closure policies that may be forthcoming. Both Stanley Hall and Rivertown Ballroom are located on Pollock Street. Parking and street closures were not an impact on the businesses when they first opened, but they are now. He estimated 15,000 customers visit the businesses annually. Informal estimates reveal each customer spends approximately \$100 a day while in New Bern. Notwithstanding COVID, their business revenues are down about 40% because of street closures. Every bride that wants to use the facility asks about parking and several have booked other venues because they perceive parking downtown as a problem. In closing, he asked that the Board look at a policy that takes into consideration the fact Stanley Hall is not like most other businesses downtown.

Joyce Price of 305 Pollock Street elected not to approach the podium since Mr. Hooker spoke on her behalf.

Noting Alderman Brinson's participation, Ruth Cooper of 1022 Colleton Way in Trent Woods reported on the cleanup that took place this past weekend in Duffyfield. She expressed disappointment that others did not participate. When she asked why others do not turn out to assist, she was told residents feel jaded

by the promises and plans that have been made for Duffyfield that never come to fruition. She has been told money that was earmarked for Duffyfield was used in other areas. The Tisdale House is still standing where the new Stanley White Recreation Center ("SWRC") is to be built, although she has heard the house will be moved by May 20, 2023. However, it will be years before the kids and adults in Duffyfield have a place to go for fun activities and meetings. According to an article in the Sun Journal on January 09, 2022, a health center was to be built at 908 Bloomfield Street, but she has not heard a recent update on the center. As a North Carolina licensed registered nurse, she expressed a desire to see it built before she is too old to practice there. Detailing an encounter she had with a homeless gentleman in Duffyfield, she was hopeful the City would pursue affordable housing.

Mayor Odham thanked Mrs. Cooper for her email. As far as comments made by her, he and Alderman Brinson attended a meeting this past weekend at the Omega Center to discuss the Duffyfield area. A significant investment of approximately \$8.5 million has been spent over the last five years on drainage in Duffyfield. The previous Board allocated \$350,000 for a health and wellness center to be built by the Redevelopment Commission, and the Commission is shooting for a groundbreaking ceremony in June. The City has leased the Omega Center for the last three or four years to provide similar programming that was available at SWRC. Kari Warren, Director of Parks and Recreation, highlighted the programs that have been offered for children as well as senior citizens and others. Flyers are distributed and information is placed on the website about the available programs.

Since Mrs. Cooper mentioned the Tisdale House, Alderman Brinson asked for an update. Mr. Hughes said Dan Tower, the owner of the Rhem Street property, has been working to move the house. The goal is to move it on May 20th, and the only holdup at this point is acquiring permits from the NC Department of Transportation.

Consent Agenda

5. Consider Approving a Proclamation Honoring Rev. Robert Johnson.

After pastoring Ebenezer Presbyterian Church for 43 years, Rev. Robert Johnson is retiring. The proclamation recognizes not only his time pastoring the church, but his extensive involvement and contributions to the citizens of New Bern.

6. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Close South Front Street at Palace Point Commons for Tryon Palace's Glorious 4th Event.

Tryon Palace requested to close the portion of South Front Street by Palace Point Commons on July 4, 2023 from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. for its annual Glorious Fourth of July Celebration.

7. Consider Adopting a Resolution Closing Streets for United Worship Center's Community Day.

Denise Robinson with United Worship Center requested the 900 block of Main Street and the 800 block of West Street be closed to vehicular traffic on May 20, 2023 from 12 noon until 6 p.m. for a community day event. A rain date of May 27, 2023 was sought.

8. Consider Adopting a Resolution Closing Streets for Juneteenth of New Bern Celebration.

On behalf of Juneteenth of New Bern, Talina Massey requested to close to vehicular traffic the 500-700 blocks of Third Avenue from 8 a.m. until 12 noon on June 17, 2023 for a parade and the 1000-1200 blocks of Broad Street and 500-600 blocks of Roundtree Street from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. for festivities. A rain date was not sought.

9. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Call for a Public Hearing on the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.

Copies of the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 were distributed to the Board at a work session on May 02, 2023. A public hearing is requested to be held on May 23, 2023.

10. Approve Minutes.

Draft minutes from the April 25, 2023 meeting were provided for review and approval.

Alderman Best made a motion to approve Items 5-10 of the Consent Agenda, seconded by Alderman Prill. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

11. Presentation by CPL Architects on Bids for Stanley White Recreation Center.

Five bids were received for the SWRC project and opened on April 25, 2023. T.A. Loving Company submitted the lowest bid at \$13,180,400. CPL Architects reviewed the bids and recommended the City enter into negotiations with this company. The estimated timeline for construction is 14 months. Mr. Hughes sought direction from the Board to proceed with contract negotiations.

Alderman Royal asked for background information on CPL Architects, and Mr. Hughes noted the firm specializes in parks and recreation facilities. The firm designed the New Bern Aquatics Center and was involved with the SWRC environmental assessment and concept plan. Mayor Odham felt there were some

items that could be value engineered, and he asked if a conversation had taken place with CPL about that. Mr. Hughes said yes and noted the firm would attend the Board's next meeting to discuss this further.

Alderman Aster made a motion to enter into a contract with T.A. Loving for the Stanley White Recreation Center, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

12. City Manager's Presentation of Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, the City Manager formally presented the proposed budget distributed to the Board at the May 02, 2023 work session. After incorporating changes already suggested by the Board, the total budget represents \$149,449,202 for all funds. This is a 6.8% overall increase from Fiscal Year 2023. Funds are included to implement the remainder of the salary study, a 3% cost-of-living adjustment ("COLA") and up to a 2% merit for employees. Two new positions and six reclassifications are proposed. Revenues, expenditures, and capital purchases were reviewed by fund. Fund balance in the amount of \$297,537 will be appropriated to help balance the budget. Mr. Hughes also discussed the impact of the real property revaluation. It was recommended the current tax rate of \$0.4822 be lowered to \$0.4159, which would be a rise of approximately 3.5 to 4 cents from the current revenue neutral position. The current MSD tax rate of \$0.1375 was recommended to be lowered to the revenue neutral rate of \$0.1122. Future increases are anticipated in solid waste, water, and sewer rates. A budget hearing will be held May 23, 2023 with a goal to adopt the budget on June 13, 2023. A copy of the budget is available in the City Clerk's office, at the library, and on the City's website.

Alderman Aster questioned the notation under the General Fund highlights for the purchase of one firetruck and refurbishment of two, stating he thought two trucks would be purchased. Mr. Hughes stated the highlights were not adjusted since pricing for the truck was not yet known.

Alderman Royal asked about the amount sought under the Rural Transformation grant, and Mr. Hughes explained the full amount of \$950,000 was requested since the SWRC project falls within a different category than the Pepsi Museum. The City stands a better chance of receiving the full amount for the recreation center.

Alderman Brinson asked about the reasoning for including a 3% COLA since the implementation of the salary study provided a 5-14% increase. Mr. Hughes explained fully implementing the salary study brought employees' salaries up to market as of June of last year, but the cost of living still increased. The Consumer Price Index ("CPI") at the end of 2022 was 8.5%, hence the COLA and merit increases. The City is still catching up.

Alderman Prill asked if any discussion was given to reducing the MSD tax rate given that the MSD fund balance is fairly flush with money and there are no specific projects at the moment. Mr. Hughes said there was no discussion about

reducing it below the revenue neutral rate. There was discussion about holding a meeting with members of the MSD to discuss potential projects and an MSD committee. This meeting will take place before the budget is adopted.

13. Consider Approving an Amended 2023 Holiday Calendar.

As directed by the Board at its April 25, 2023 meeting, the 2023 holiday calendar was amended to add one personal observance day to be used by employees at any time during the calendar year in accordance with guidelines that are forthcoming. The personal observance day will not accrue.

Alderman Aster made a motion to adopt the amended 2023 holiday calendar, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried 6-1 with Mayor Odham voting against it.

14. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving the 2023 Community Development Block Grant ("CDBG") Program Annual Action Plan.

Each year, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") requires Entitlement Cities to submit an Annual Action Plan as application for funding. The plan summarizes the actions, activities and specific resources that will be used to address needs and goals in the Strategic Plan. A public hearing was held to receive input on how to utilize the funds. The City's \$294,122 funding allocation for program year 2023 is designated for the following uses: \$58,824 for administration (staff salaries, planning activities, and market studies), \$70,500 to demolish up to three structures in low-moderate income areas, \$24,000 for Catholic Charities to provide rent and utility assistance for homelessness prevention, \$20,000 for staff salaries at My Sister's House, \$35,000 for improvements to the Omega Center, \$50,000 for The Village youth center to acquire adjacent properties for expanded outdoor play space, and \$35,798 to construct an outdoor, half-court basketball court in the Sunnyside community. Chris Seaberg, Community and Economic Development Manager, noted the plan has not changed since it was presented to the Board at the April 25, 2023 meeting.

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt a resolution approving the 2023 Community Development Block Grant Program Annual Action Plan, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

15. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving an Audit Contract for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023.

After advertising a Request for Proposal ("RFP") for audit services last year, the Board selected Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co. to again perform the City's audit. The firm has performed the audits for Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. The cost for services is \$42,500, which includes all major programs and does not represent an increase from last year. Mayor Odham said he typically likes to see the audit firm changed up, but if only two firms responded there is no

choice. Mrs. Ostrom expressed a desire to stay with Thompson Price this year and next year as that would then put the City at the end of a three-year mark at which time a new RFP would be issued.

Alderman Royal made a motion to adopt a resolution approving an audit contract for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023, seconded by Alderman Prill. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

16. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving the Sale of Tax Parcel ID 8-006-173 on Lees Avenue.

After receiving a bid of \$2,000 from Beau Dorsey for the purchase of Tax Parcel ID 8-006-173 on Lees Avenue, the bid was advertised. No upset bids were received. The parcel is a vacant 0.12-acre residential lot with a tax value of \$4,000. It was acquired jointly by the City and County in October 2015 through tax foreclosure. If the property is sold, the City will be reimbursed advertising costs and the County will receive proceeds of \$1,822.90.

Alderman Prill made a motion to adopt a resolution approving the sale of Tax Parcel ID 8-006-173 on Lees Avenue, seconded by Alderman Best. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

17. Consider Adopting a Resolution Establishing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

In October 2022, the Board adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that calls for an advisory committee to guide the implementation of the plan. The committee will offer input, advocate for project funding, assist in applying for grants, and assist with organizing pedestrian and bicycle-related events. The committee will meet at least quarterly and will be comprised of five voting members appointed by the Governing Board. Staggered, three-year terms will be established. Jessica Rhue, Director of Development Services, noted Ex-Officio members will include one member of the Board of Aldermen, the Metropolitan Planning Organization Administrator, and Directors of Development Services, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation.

Alderman Brinson said if the committee is established, he and others will recruit active bicyclists and walkers to serve on the Board and will present recommendations and resumes for the Board's consideration. He then asked to be the Board's representative on the committee.

Alderman Brinson made a motion to adopt a resolution establishing a bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee, seconded by Alderman Aster. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

Alderman Aster made a motion to appoint Alderman Brinson to serve on the Committee, seconded by Alderman Prill. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

18. Consider Adopting a Resolution Restating Support and Authorization for the Submission of an Application for a Rural Transformation Grant for the Stanley A. White Recreation Center Project.

At its April 25, 2023 meeting, the Board directed the City Manager to proceed with an application for the Rural Transformation Grant through the NC Department of Commerce. This resolution formally declares the Board's desire to pursue the grant to help fund construction of the Stanley White Recreation Center project. Mrs. Warren announced the amount sought was \$950,000, and an award will be made in June. Mr. Hughes explained staff was unaware a resolution was needed to apply for the grant. Staff spoke with the Department of Commerce, which allowed the City to include minutes from the last meeting with its application and follow up with a signed resolution.

Alderman Aster made a motion to adopt a resolution restating support and authorization for the submission of an application for a Rural Transformation Grant for the Stanley A. White Recreation Center project, seconded by Alderman Best. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

19. Appointment(s).

Alderman Kinsey made a motion to appoint Wayne Unangst to the Firemen's Museum Board of Directors, seconded by Alderman Aster. The motion carried unanimously 7-0. Mr. Unangst will serve a three-year term to expire on April 22, 2026.

Alderman Brinson made a motion to reappoint Elona Fowler to the Friends of the Firemen's Museum Board of Directors, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 7-0. Ms. Fowler will serve a three-year term to expire on April 22, 2026.

20. Attorney's Report.

The City Attorney had nothing to report.

21. City Manager's Report.

Mr. Hughes announced the contractor has advised the elevator is being installed, but there are issues with the panel and breaker that serve the unit. It may be July before the annex is opened.

22. New Business.

Alderman Best

Several citizens contacted her about a big dip in Washington Street. She asked that Public Works look at the area.

23. Closed Session.

A closed session was not needed.

24. Adjourn.

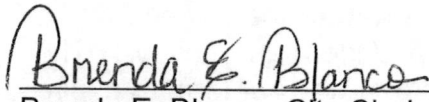
Alderman Royal made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 6:53 p.m.

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: May 23, 2023



Jeffrey T. Odham, Mayor

Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk