

**CITY OF NEW BERN  
BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEETING  
JUNE 13, 2023 – 6:00 P.M.  
CITY HALL COURTROOM  
300 POLLOCK STREET**

- 1. Meeting opened by Mayor Jeffrey Odham. Prayer by Johnathan Gaskins, City of New Bern Fire Marshal. 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 (arrived at 6:03 p.m.), 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.

Mr. Hughes introduced Ernest Simmons, the newly-hired Director of Information Technology. Mr. Simmons stated he was happy to be with New Bern and that he looked forward to serving the citizens of New Bern.

- 3. Approve Agenda**

Alderman Royal made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. The motion carried unanimously 6-0. Alderman Best had not yet arrived.

- 4. Request and Petition of Citizens.**

Joshua Forbis of 104 Sardis Lane, a Fire Specialist with the City of New Bern Fire Department, said he has been an employee for a more than three and a half years. During that time, he has given "blood, sweat, and tears" to the City while missing out on time at home, family birthdays, funerals, and other events. He works three jobs to provide for his family, and his wife works one. Over half of the firemen work more than one job. He asked the Board to be people of integrity and do what is right. The employees in the Fire Department do not have a death wish, but each one is willing to risk their life to save another's. Employees are only asking for a little help so they can spend more time at home watching their children grow instead of working extra jobs for supplemental income. During Mr. Forbis' full address to the Board, numerous family members and employees stood in support of his comments. At the conclusion, the audience applauded.

Edwin Vargas of 119 Randomwood Lane in River Bend posed the following questions: how were the FEMA funds from Hurricane Florence utilized, why does the 2023-24 budget not show a line item for Stormwater Management, will the City

have a surplus of sales taxes, and is the \$308,822 budgeted for legal fees the going rate for similarly-sized municipalities and pay for two attorneys?

Paul Fonville of 517 Second Avenue described issues he has had with his electricity. The first issue left him without power for two months. He thanked the City Clerk for her help, stating that was the only way he got the issue resolved. Subsequently, on May 10, 2023, a rotten City of New Bern utility pole fell during a storm and ripped out the power box from his house, which he felt was the City's liability. He explained to utility workers that his wife was on dialysis and restoration of electricity was a priority, but there was no sense of urgency from the City. The City stated the incident was not their fault and was due to a storm. He asked the City to do the right thing and reimburse him more than \$3,000 he paid for repair of his electric box. Mayor Odham asked Mr. Fonville to provide his written statement to the City Clerk so she could forward it to the Board and asked the City Manager to email the Board on the following day with a status of where things stand.

### **Consent Agenda**

**5. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Close Specific Streets for Guildfield Missionary Baptist Church Fun Day.**

Guildfield Missionary Baptist Church has scheduled a Fun Day for July 29, 2023. The church requested the 800 block of Green Street be closed to vehicular traffic from 10:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. to accommodate the event. A rain date was not requested.

**6. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Initiate the Upset Bid Process for 1724 Rhem Avenue.**

Eugene Kelley, Jr. tendered an offer of \$10,200 for the purchase of 1724 Rhem Avenue. The property is a vacant 0.044-acre residential lot with a tax value of \$20,250 that was acquired jointly by the City and County in 2019 through tax foreclosure. If the property is sold for the initial bid, the City is projected to receive \$3,326.09 and the County \$6,873.91 from the proceeds.

**7. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Initiate the Upset Bid Process for 2308 Pearson Street.**

The Third Property Development & Estate Investment Group tendered an offer of \$2,500 for the purchase of 2308 Pearson Street. The property is a vacant 0.115-acre residential lot with a tax value of \$5,000 that was acquired jointly by the City and County in 2018 through tax foreclosure. If the property is sold for the initial bid, the City is projected to receive \$478.51 and the County \$2,021.49 from the proceeds.

**8. Approve Minutes.**

Minutes from the March 28, 2023 closed session, the work session held on May 02, May 03, and May 09, 2023, and the regular meeting minutes from May 23, 2023 were provided for review and approval.

Alderman Prill made a motion to approve Items 5-8 of the Consent Agenda, seconded by Alderman Brinson. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

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**9. Conduct a Public Hearing on the System Development Fee Evaluation and Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving the Evaluation.**

Prior to adopting updates to the water and sewer system development fee analysis, a public hearing is required pursuant to Chapter 162A, Article 8 of the NC General Statutes. The updated analysis was posted on the City's webpage to solicit and allow public input during a 45-day period.

Mayor Odham opened the public hearing, but no one came forward to speak. Alderman Best made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Alderman Aster. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

Jordan Hughes, City Engineer, described the history of the system development fees and how they must be calculated. The City's first set of fees was adopted in 2018, and statute requires the fee analysis be updated every five years.

Alderman Prill made a motion to adopt a resolution approving the System Development Fee Evaluation, seconded by Alderman Aster. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

**10. Consider Adopting an Ordinance to Restate the Schedule of System Development and Connections Fees Applicable to Water and Sewer Customers of the City of New Bern.**

The current schedule of system development and connection fees was adopted by the Board on June 12, 2018. The schedule is required to be updated every five years as noted above. Jordan Hughes explained the revision incorporates recommendations from the recent evaluation. The fees are almost entirely applicable to new construction only.

Alderman Prill made a motion to adopt an ordinance restating the Schedule of System Development and Connection Fees Applicable to Water and Sewer Customers of the City of New Bern, seconded by Alderman Aster. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

NOTE: Items 11 and 12 were voted on collaboratively as noted under Item 12.

**11. Consider Adopting an Ordinance to Restate the Schedule of Water Rates Applicable to Customers of the City of New Bern.**

The City's water rates have remained unchanged since 2015 when the rates decreased by 6%. The new schedule reflects an increase of \$1.67 per month in the readiness-to-serve portion of the rate. Average water usage for customers is 4,000 gallons per month, which equates to an increase of about \$3.37 per month.

**12. Consider Adopting an Ordinance to Restate the Schedule of Sewer Rates Applicable to Customers of the City of New Bern.**

The City's water rates have remained unchanged since 2015 when the rates decreased by 4.5%. The new schedule reflects an increase of 4.5% for all segments of the rate.

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt an ordinance to restate the schedule of water rates applicable to customers of the City of New Bern and an ordinance to restate the schedule of sewer rates applicable to customers of the City of New Bern, seconded by Alderman Prill. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

**13. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Approve Amendments to the City of New Bern Water and Sewer Design Standards.**

The current water and sewer design standards were adopted by the Board on July 14, 2020. The document is updated periodically to keep it consistent with state regulations, construction practices, and material standards. The proposed amendments include minor technical and grammatical changes as well as feedback from a group of stakeholders consisting of developers, home builders, utility contractors, and engineers.

Alderman Prill made a motion to adopt a resolution approving amendments to the City of New Bern Water and Sewer Design Standards, seconded by Alderman Best. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

**14. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving the Classification Pay Plan for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.**

Annually, the Board adopts a Classification Pay Plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The Board is asked to consider a resolution approving the plan for FY2023-24, which reflects proposed changes that have been incorporated into the FY24 budget. In part, those changes include the addition of a Heavy Equipment Mechanic, deletion of four position titles, changes to some titles, and reclassification of several positions. Alderman Aster inquired about the Administrative Assistant for Human Resources, and Sonya Hayes, Director of Human Resources, explained the position was already in the pay plan, but had not been previously funded.



Alderman Brinson asked whether the pay plan incorporates the pay study. Mrs. Hayes said the plan had nothing to do with the study. The minimum, mid-point, and maximum ranges are the same as last year. The plan was only modified for new position titles, reclassifications, deletions of titles, etc.

Alderman Aster inquired about the titles for Director of Utilities and Director of Water Resources, and Mrs. Hayes pointed out a revised memo and pay plan was presented to eliminate a proposed change in the title of Director of Utilities. Alderman Kinsey said proposes in Department Head statuses are normally brought before the Board, and he questioned why this was just now coming up. Mr. Hughes said the Director of Water Resources was discussed during the budget workshops. He looked at creating the director position for Jordan Hughes, City Engineer, when the Board changed the residency requirements.

Alderman Royal asked if the numbers in the classification pay plan were constant from last year's budget. Mrs. Hayes said the minimum, midpoint and maximum salaries did not change; only titles changed.

Alderman Prill made a motion to adopt a resolution approving the classification pay plan for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, seconded by Alderman Brinson. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried 6-1 with Alderman Kinsey voting against it.

**15. Consider Adopting an Ordinance Amending the Schedule of Fees and Charges.**

As part of the budget process, the Board annually adopts an Amended Schedule of Fees and Charges to, in part, identify in one place all the fees charged by the City. The fees identified in the schedule are included in the revenue projections for Fiscal Year 2023-24 and will be effective July 1, 2023. Alderman Brinson commented the fee that is most applicable to citizens is probably the trash rate. He asked George Chiles, Director of Public Works, to explain the increase. Mr. Chiles noted the need to pass along increases due to inflationary costs and GFL raising its rates. The rate will rise from \$14.93 to \$19.00 a month.

Alderman Royal made a motion to adopt an ordinance amending the Schedule of Fees and Charges, seconded by Alderman Prill. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

**16. Consider Adopting the Budget Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.**

The City Manager delivered the proposed budget to the Board on May 02, 2023 followed by a revised, proposed budget on May 09, 2023. A public hearing was conducted on May 23, 2023, at which time five individuals offered input, three of whom were residents of the Trolley Run subdivision. Subsequently, a majority of the Board provided direction to make cuts in the budget and set the property tax at the revenue-neutral rate of \$0.3734. Those changes are reflected in the final ordinance.

Questioning how a person is expected to live on a 3% cost-of-living adjustment ("COLA") when their salaries are already behind, Alderman Kinsey said he felt the budget should not be passed. Everyone wants to call employees their heroes and friends, and he felt the Board needed to make the right decision to give employees what they are due. Employees have families, but the Board expects them to work during storms, which they do to get the job done. He stated he wanted to see the Manager fight for the employees just as he is, and he wanted to see the Board give employees a 4% increase with a COLA and a merit. Some employees do not go to the doctor because they cannot meet the deductible. The City is not doing the employees right. New Bern proposed the lowest increase of anyone. Other employers are looking at these talented people and are willing to take them away from the City of New Bern. Alderman Kinsey compared the City's decision to put in a \$4 million elevator for 23 meetings a year to the need to spend money on its employees. Mayor Odham asked if Alderman Kinsey was proposing the 4% start July 1st, and he responded yes. The Mayor then asked Kim Ostrom, Director of Finance, what that would cost.

Alderman Aster said employees are seeing the same inflationary increases as everyone else. He felt the Board should implement the COLA as well as the merit increase, noting previous discussion had centered around a 3% COLA. Alderman Kinsey felt 3% was lowballing. Alderman Aster stated he was in favor of paying employees and noted they are the ones restoring electricity, fighting fire during 110 mph winds, and patrolling the streets to keep the City safe when it is most vulnerable, while Board members and others are home in bed. He was concerned the City would be a step behind if it did not provide these increases. Alderman Kinsey said some employees have been out working to cut a tree off utility poles when back at home there was a tree on their own house. He said he held the City Manager and Board accountable for making a decision that is right for the employees.

In response to the question posed by the Mayor, Mrs. Ostrom said a 4% COLA would equate to about a \$1,876,555 increase from what was presented to the Board earlier in the day. Mayor Odham then questioned what that amount would liken to with respect to pulling from fund balance or increasing the tax rate.

Alderman Best asked for clarification from Aldermen Aster and Kinsey as to the amounts they supported. Alderman Aster said he was in favor of both a 3% COLA and a 2% merit, and Alderman Kinsey said he wanted a 4% COLA and 2% merit. Alderman Kinsey suggested the funds come from fund balance and asked for the amount in fund balance. He then suggested a 4% COLA and 4% merit. The City spent a lot of money to renovate the courtroom and repaint City Hall. After spending all that money, he questioned if the Mayor was saying the employees were not worth the raise.

Alderman Prill said he has been very clear as to his position and felt it would be a significant mistake if the revenue-neutral tax rate was approved. That rate does not include a COLA or merit increase, puts the City's salaries behind, and will only exacerbate what will eventually need to be done a year from now. He

recommended an incremental approach to a tax increase. If the City does not try to keep pace with increasing costs, it is falling behind. That means next year the tax rate increase will need to be even larger to catch up. Alderman Prill noted the Manager made a statement that at the last meeting a majority of the Board gave him direction to go to a revenue neutral rate, but that is not correct. Only three gave that direction; he talked about an incremental increase and the other three members of the Board did not say anything. A desire has been expressed tonight to put a COLA and possibly a merit in place. To do that with a revenue-neutral tax rate, the choices are to take money from fund balance or make additional budget cuts. Relying on fund balance to pay for operating expenses is poor planning and bad policy. Alderman Prill said his position was to increase the tax rate about a penny and a half above the revenue-neutral rate. This will not solve all problems, but will give more flexibility. He did not have a problem with a 3% COLA effective July 1<sup>st</sup> and a 2% merit.

Alderman Best asked what a 2% merit would cost the General Fund. Mrs. Ostrom responded the impact to the General Fund was \$485,000 and \$255,000 for the enterprise funds.

Alderman Brinson expressed concern for citizens when increasing the tax rate above revenue neutral. A constituent from College Park called when she received notice that the value of her duplex rose from \$58,000 to \$101,000 following the revaluation. She is a widow on a fixed income and cannot pay the increased taxes. He told her that the tax rate would be brought down, and she seemed satisfied. Even with a revenue-neutral rate, her City taxes will go up \$99 a year. The City is raising water and trash rates too. Those who own properties valued under \$150,000 are hit the most by the revaluation because their values doubled. Alderman Brinson voiced a commitment to a revenue-neutral rate to help the most vulnerable, as he did not want to push them out of the City. Although he would love to pay employees more, he was not willing to raise taxes to do that. While it may be a bad policy if a COLA or merit are given, he felt the cost should come from fund balance since it is a revaluation year. Alderman Aster asked if he agreed with a COLA effective July 1<sup>st</sup> and a merit later in the year. Alderman Brinson said that would be fine.

Alderman Best said she too wanted a revenue-neutral tax rate. At the May 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting, she did not indicate employees should not be given a raise. Instead, she suggested waiting to give the 3% COLA and 2% merit after there was an opportunity to see the end-of-year revenue. Employees need to understand the Board is implementing the second phase of the salary study effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. She would never deny employees a raise and has always been for the employees from the first day she sat at the dais. It was disheartening to hear some of the statements employees made. While she does not have a problem with the 3% COLA and 2% merit, she does not want to raise taxes to give the increases. She stated she had strong reservations and felt the Board should wait until January 1<sup>st</sup> to implement the COLA. At that time, a lot of revenue may be coming in to allow the Board to give a 4% COLA. Instead of a revenue-neutral rate, she was looking at the 0.38 rate calculated by the Manager. Alderman Aster asked if she would be

opposed to splitting the increases to give a 3% COLA effective July 1st and the merit effective January. Alderman Best did not have a problem with that.

Alderman Kinsey said the Board keeps kicking the can down the road. Why not stop giving the services the City gives? According to him, the Board would rather take away from people who work. He said there was a need for people to pay for what they get (i.e., the services provided) and a need to give employees what they are due. The more the increases are put off, the longer it will take to catch up. Alderman Best said not once has she said not to give the employees what they are due. Her suggestion has been to wait until revenues are known.

Alderman Royal said she pretty much agreed with Alderman Brinson and did not want to see taxes increase for the most vulnerable citizens. However, when it comes to the City's very valuable employees, she believed a laborer is worth his hire. She said she wanted to see the employees paid, stating never could the City pay them their worth, but it could start trying. She voiced a desire to implement the 3% COLA, second phase of the salary increase, and 2% merit effective July 1<sup>st</sup> with the cost pulled from fund balance. She supported a revenue-neutral tax rate.

Having heard from everyone on the Board, Mayor Odham announced he sent an email to the City Manager a couple of days ago stating his direction was to round up the revenue-neutral tax rate to 38%. That will provide close the General Fund with almost an additional \$400,000. He would support a 3% merit increase effect January 1<sup>st</sup> with no COLA.

Alderman Prill said there is another option the Board may want to consider. Given the merit is performance based for the FY2022-23 budget year, the Board could look at a budget amendment before June 30<sup>th</sup> to appropriate necessary funds from this year's budget for the merit. This eliminates the need to worry about it in next year's budget. To clarify, Mr. Hughes noted merits are based on evaluations that are performed in January for the previous calendar year. Merits are not tied to budget years. If a merit is approved effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, that would be based off the January 2023 evaluations for the 2022 calendar year. If a merit increase is approved effective January 2024, that will be based off evaluations for the 2023 calendar year. Referring to Alderman Prill's comments, Alderman Brinson confirmed that any budget amendment prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> would pull funds from fund balance.

Alderman Aster made a motion to give employees a 3% COLA and a 2% merit increase with funds coming from fund balance with a \$0.38 tax rate effective July 1, seconded by Alderman Royal. Prior to seconding the motion, Alderman Royal asked Mr. Hughes to restate the timeframe for the merit. He recounted his previous explanation and noted merits usually start July 1<sup>st</sup>. Also prior to the second, Alderman Kinsey commented he felt the motion could be seconded if the merit was increased to 3%. Alderman Aster said he would love to, but he was concerned his current motion may not pass. At that point, Alderman Royal seconded the motion.



Alderman Brinson asked how much would need to be pulled from fund balance to provide the 3% COLA, 2% merit and implement at a \$0.38 tax rate. Mrs. Ostrom stated that would be approximately \$1,359,827 from fund balance. On last report, fund balance was noted to be \$25 million, which puts the percentage at about 34-35%. In response to hearing the fund balance amount, Alderman Kinsey asked why the Board was worried about money. Mayor Odham recalled the City was close to a 50% fund balance when Hurricane Florence struck, and the storm brought the balance down to 6% or 7%. Alderman Best confirmed with staff that the reported fund balance does not include uncollected FEMA funds. That is an additional \$4.5 to \$5 million.

Upon a roll-call vote, the motion on the floor carried 6-1 with Mayor Odham voting against it.

Alderman Kinsey made a motion to add 1% to the merit to make it 3%. The motion died for lack of a second. Alderman Kinsey commented "so that's how much ya'll love your employees."

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt the budget ordinance for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 as amended, seconded by Alderman Aster. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried 6-1 with Mayor Odham voting against it.

**17. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving a Memorandum of Understanding with the Marine Forces Special Operations Command ("MARFORSOC").**

(Alderman Aster momentarily stepped out of the room at 7:27 p.m.)

On November 12, 2019, the Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command to permit periodic training within the municipal limits of the City of New Bern. The agreement was executed by MARFORSOC in March of 2020 and valid for a three-year period. Those involved in the training exercises include military personnel, government civilian workers, or contractors, but no private citizens. The new agreement is for a five-year term.

(Alderman Aster returned to the room at 7:29 p.m.)

Alderman Royal made a motion to adopt a resolution approving a Memorandum of Understanding with Marine Forces Special Operations Command, seconded by Alderman Prill. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.



**18. Consider Adopting a Resolution Authorizing the Submission of an Application for the 2023 Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletproof Vest Grant.**

The New Bern Police Department desires to apply for the Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletproof Vest grant in the amount of \$9,825. The grant does require a match in the same amount. If awarded, funds will be used to purchase approximately 15 vests. The FY24 budget includes funding for the required match. Police Chief Patrick Gallagher pointed out the City has applied for this grant for approximately the last 20 years. If the City does not receive the grant, the Department will need to pay the full amount of the purchase.

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the submission of an application for the 2023 Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletproof Vest Grant, seconded by Alderman Brinson.

(Alderman Kinsey momentarily stepped out of the room at 7:30 p.m.)

Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0. Of note, Alderman Kinsey had stepped out of the room thus technically yielding a vote in the affirmative.

**19. Appointment(s).**

No appointments were made.

Mayor Odham noted Theresa Lee resigned from the Redevelopment Commission effective in July. Her term would expire in August, but she chose to resign early to allow for the transition phase. To avoid filling the seat for just a one-month period, it was suggested a new appointment be made in August. Mayor Odham recommended the City Clerk include information about the vacancy in the next agenda package so people can express interest in the seat. The Board can delay its appointment until August.

**20. Attorney's Report.**

The City Attorney had nothing to report.

**21. City Manager's Report.**

Mr. Hughes provided the following updates:

- A follow-up meeting will be held with Municipal Service District ("MSD") property owners on Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m. An opportunity will be provided for attendees and ROKU viewers to vote on potential projects. Mayor Odham cautioned staff to keep in mind that votes may be cast by those who are not MSD property owners.

- The elevator project is expected to be complete by the end of July. The goal is to plan a grand opening in early August.
- An employee luncheon will be held tomorrow at West New Bern Recreation Center.
- Electric utilities received a safety award for no lost workdays in 2022.

## **22. New Business.**

### Alderman Royal

It is good to see the Tisdale House has been relocated and the Stanley White Recreation Center construction sign in place.

The weekly report indicated the streets in Duffyfield are being resolved. Mr. Hughes stated several streets will need to be milled after July 4<sup>th</sup>, and the paving company will begin work after that.

Alderman Royal suggested the City do whatever is needed to assist Paul Fonville and his family.

Father Tully will be moving from New Bern to Holly Springs. He has been a staple in New Bern for the last 9 years. An opportunity to say farewell will be held this Sunday at 3 p.m. in the Family Life Center at St. Paul Catholic Church.

### Alderman Aster

Gratitude was expressed to the New Bern Electric Department for finishing the mess left by the NC Department of Transportation at the entrance of Taberna.

An updated list of cellphone numbers for all Department Heads was requested. Mr. Hughes indicated a list would be sent to all Board members.

### Alderman Best

She received an email indicating Public Works would try to work with the paving company to get the work started sooner. Mr. Chiles explained sections in Duffyfield still need to be milled off before resurfacing can be performed. Milling should only take one day.

(Alderman Kinsey returned to the room at 7:37 p.m.)

Chief Gallagher was asked to provide information on how National Night Out will be organized in 2023. According to the Chief, the same plan as last year will be implemented. The Police Department will communicate with all neighborhoods to determine how many desires to participate. Alderman Best noted the Pleasant Hill community wanted to hold an event at the Pleasant Hill Park, and she requested a sign. Chief Gallagher noted the signs must be purchased in groups of five so there should be one available for Pleasant Hill. He did point out that most, if not all, resources would be focused on the citywide event downtown. Any community can hold its own event without the permission of the Chief. The department will try to have some representation present in the communities that choose to hold their own event.

A member of the African American Heritage Cultural Center has expressed interest in staying in the old firemen's museum and has inquired about the ability to lease or rent the building. Mr. Hughes said there has been conversation with

the group over the last two years. The most recent proposal was a year ago in which they asked for a no-cost, long-term lease or for the City to give them the property. The conversation stopped there, as a majority was not in favor of that proposal. Alderman Best said she would pass on the individual's name to Mr. Hughes, and the topic could be brought back to the Board, including discussion of the Board's desire to sell or maintain ownership of the property.

The Board previously spoke about the FEMA funding for the BP station. Alderman Best asked how that funding is reflected in the budget. Mr. Hughes said the budget does not reflect the funding. Direction has not yet been given by the Board on how to use the funds. Alderman Best suggested the funds be used for a fire station in West New Bern. Alderman Brinson asked how soon a change in scope of work should be submitted to FEMA. Mr. Hughes responded now would be timely as this matter has been ongoing for five years. Alderman Aster felt using the funds for an amphitheater would generate revenue, and he asked when a report would be available with cost information for the amphitheater. After Mr. Hughes replied that it would be available in a few weeks, Mayor Odham asked if the information could be ready in two weeks and placed on the next agenda. A fire station will likely cost \$5 to \$10 million with an annual operating cost of \$1 million. That is about 3 to 4 cents on the tax rate that will need to be covered in future budgets.

#### Alderman Brinson

Thanks was expressed to Public Works and the Stormwater Division for work performed in Kings Row. Residents are very pleased with the progress.

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, Alderman Brinson attended the Naval Health Clinic change of command. That afternoon he witnessed the first F35 to arrive at Cherry Point. Six more squadrons of F35s will be at Cherry Point, which means 3,000 more marines over the next five years. This will have an impact on New Bern.

The Ward 6 Town Hall meeting was held on June 8<sup>th</sup> with over 20 attendees. Great discussion was had.

A women's veterans resource event will be held on June 16<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Convention Center.

Emails were sent out today to those who have expressed an interest in serving on the bike and pedestrian committee. The goal is to present resumes or letters of interest at the Board's July 11<sup>th</sup> meeting for consideration of appointments.

#### Mayor Odham

The Board was commended for going through the budget process, which is not easy. It is important to grow the City with residents and new businesses to add to the tax base. Mayor Odham said he personally wanted to see the budget process handled differently next year. He preferred a preliminary budget meeting in December to review some of the revenues and anticipated expenditures. He asked for the proposed budget to be given to the Board before work sessions are started. Historically, the Board has held an annual retreat, which can help with crafting the budget.

It is time again for the City Manager's six-month review. Survey Monkey was utilized for the last review, and no one was opposed to that same process. The

Mayor will prepare and send out the survey, and the results will be reviewed during a closed session at the next meeting.

**23. Closed Session.**

A closed session was not needed.

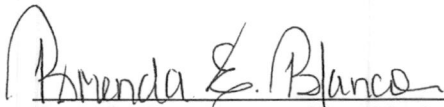
**24. Adjourn**

Alderman Kinsey made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Brinson. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 7:56 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](http://www.newbernnc.gov). Video and audio recordings of the meeting have been archived.

Minutes approved: June 27, 2023

  
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Jeffrey T. Odham, Mayor  
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Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk