

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 19, 2024 CITY COUNCIL RETREAT

A SPECIAL meeting of the Hopewell City Council was held on Monday, February 19, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: John B. Partin, Mayor
Jasmine Gore, Vice Mayor
Rita Joyner, Councilor
Michael Harris, Councilor(Virtual, Closed session)
Janice Denton, Councilor (Virtual)
Brenda Pelham, Councilor
Dominic Holloway, Councilor (Late)

Vice Mayor Gore makes a motion to allow Councilor Harris and Councilor Denton to participate virtually, Councilor Joyner seconds the motion.

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| ROLL CALL: | Councilor Harris | Abstain |
| | Mayor Partin | Yes |
| | Vice Mayor Gore | Yes |
| | Councilor Denton | Abstain |
| | Councilor Pelham | Yes |
| | Councilor Holloway | Absent |
| | Councilor Joyner | Yes |

Motion Passes 4-0

Vice Mayor Gore makes a motion to adopt the agenda, Mayor Partin seconds the motion.

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| ROLL CALL: | Councilor Harris | Yes |
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| Mayor Partin | Yes |
| Vice Mayor Gore | Yes |
| Councilor Denton | Yes |
| Councilor Pelham | Yes |
| Councilor Holloway | Absent |
| Councilor Joyner | Yes |

Motion Passes 6-0

SB1 – Review of existing adopted and draft of city of Hopewell Strategic plan - Vice Mayor Gore opens up the meeting with a brief description of what she will be discussing in her presentation. She based her presentation off of the powerpoint that was provided to council as well as the public. She begins discussing the strategic plan goals for the city for the upcoming fiscal year of 2025. She explains that American Water will disconnect citizen's water for non-payment going forward. She discusses the housing plans and what is important for housing going forward. Based on her slides housing should be safe, decent, sanitary, high-quality affordable housing options for renters and home owners at all income levels and stages of life. One of the issues discussed is landlords are not investing back into their properties. City attorney mentioned to add blight tax the fiscal distress number must be 100 to take advantage of the blight tax. Gears were shifted to health and wellness and parks in the city and conversation was had about which parks are being used and which are vacant. Parks and recreation is to give a report of each facility and share which parks can be brought up to recreational park level. Council agrees that they need to focus on homelessness as well as it was mentioned it is still a major issue in the city. Vice Mayor mentions there is a lack of access to mental health resources, there needs to be a full grocery store in the city, and to bring back hill fest for healthy eating. Vice Mayor requests that Dr. Manker do a survey of what they are looking for in a park and look at what parks are not being used at all for potential land use for other things. Vice Mayor Gore moves on to her next topic in her presentation which was infrastructure. She speaks to council to see if anyone had anything they wanted to mention about infrastructure in the city. The Mayor mentions there needs to be a 15 year paving plan program put in place and look at the budget to ensure this is feasible. Mayor mentions the city public Wi-Fi and LED street lights should be 95 percent complete at this time, and should be

completed in full soon. The mayor also mentioned the neighborhood flooding and would like to execute getting storm water projects funded and a real CIP program started. Sewer collection was discussed and it was mentioned that the city needs an aggressive plan to replace man holes and pump stations. They would like to see execution/funding for the stormwater and sewer. Council also agreed they need to look further into rail infrastructure and ADA plan for the city because the plan has not been fully implemented yet. Council move onto the next topic in the presentation which is public safety. Council agree that the crime overall is down and lower than the state and most violent crimes are committed by people who live outside of the city. Mayor mentions that HRHA needs to hold staff accountable, and only names on the lease should reside in the homes. Council wants to look into funding for the city and identification of nuisance properties and spot blight and put the cost of it onto the owner. Vice Mayor would like for possible investment in speed cameras and look into the fees for speeding tickets and potentially look into raising the fees for specific repetitive issues with speeding. Councilor Joyner would like to look into comprehensive approach on public safety and speak more about collective bargaining. It was mentioned that it was just clear that at this point the city does not have enough money to do collective bargaining right now. As council begins to discuss economic development, the Mayor mentions the marina and the waterfront plan. The mayor mentions there are acres in ward 2 and the bluffs for potential business. The Vice Mayor states they need to strengthen the relationship with the new superintendent for the parks. Council agrees they need to create a partnership with city clients with property on U.S. Parks development. Vice Mayor Gore mentions the film office and would like to look into filming taking place in the city like they did in the past. Vice Mayor Gore also mentions the tourism plan brand and the Petersburg Battlefield and possible renaming it. Council agrees they need to look into medical park, shallow lodge, sports tourism, and an economic development packet for people in the city. Council moves on to education and work force development and discuss soft skills to help create opportunities for employment. Vice Mayor Gore mentions she does not see any effort so far for second chance employment and would like to see that change. She would like to focus on skilled labor and technical skill labor, and vocational training. Councilor Pelham asks for it to be looked into what the school system offers towards soft skills and what is the work force development plan. Vice Mayor Gore would like for there to be mandated quarterly meetings with the school system to be in the know with what is going on and what type of fund requests they are making throughout the year. Vice Mayor Gore inquired about public transportation in the city for industry and mentions it needs to be

looked into further. She would like for second chance programs to be revisited. She mentions VJCCA funds and delinquency programs needs to be looked into. Vice Mayor Gore mentions that social services and HRHA will need to see about employment opportunities and economic programs. It was also requested by council to check with the library to see if there are any work force training that takes place there, to check into adult education, and funding expansion of summer youth programs. Council collectively move to the last topic of Vice Mayor Gore's presentation of Community Culture Development. It was suggested through council to bring back pray for Hopewell. Vice Mayor Gore mentions the city festivals and to get back into the RVA film office. Council agreed they would like to adopt Juneteenth as a festival and partner with national park service. Lastly Vice Mayor Gore would like for more social programs for working class families. At the end of Vice Mayor Gore's presentation council agreed to add Fiscal Health and City Assists to the strategic plan, under city assets they added fire station, Beacon LLC, wasterwater plant, City hall, and the marina.

SB2 – 2019 Strategic plan priorities scrub – Robert Bobb Group – Ms. Heather Ness begins her presentation going over the first few slides of her presentation beginning with housing. The idea for potential strategic initiatives are to update and implement comprehensive housing blueprints that address housing needs for all segments of the community. The presentation also suggests requiring a business license to operate individual rental properties. Health and wellness strategic plans are to recruit full service grocery stores to accessible city locations, improve physical accessibility and public awareness of healthy eating and active living. She goes through each slide in detail expressing the plan for improvement and the initiatives for the city.

SB3 – Pre-Survey Results – Robert Bobb Group – Heather Ness created a link for council to access to allow council to put in numerical order what was most important to them, the first one being the most important. Based on the survey taken, as a whole the order of priorities was listed as Economic Development being first, Fiscal Health second, public safety third, infrastructure fourth, housing fifth, education/workforce development sixth, city assets seven, community and culture eight, and health and wellness ninth. There was a survey taking for combined priorities. As a whole the group voted for fiscal health and transparency as 1, economic development as 2, determination of new revenue sources and 3, public safety as 4, environment –adding to

infrastructure 5, well trained municipal employees as 6. Council and Robert Bobb Group discussed these results amongst themselves, and agreed this was the best order.

SB4 – Development of New Strategic Priorities – Heather goes further into her presentation asking the question of what new priorities should be added and what old priorities should be removed. There was discussion between council and the Robert Bobb group further about the priorities and what council believed should be considered. A councilor suggested that real time crime be added to public safety as a conversation at a later date. What are Hopewell's future threats? This question was discussed amongst council regarding the issues and crimes that occur within the city. They agreed that although overall crime rate is down, there should be further procedures in place to help prevent crime within the city. Financially, council had conversation with the Robert Bobb Group about what could be hurting the city financially and what they could do to prevent it in the future. Council asked a multitude of questions to the Robert Bobb Group in ways they could do things better for the upcoming fiscal year of 2025. Heather gave ideas as well as Robert Bobb and offered suggestions they could consider. Council agreed to look further into suggestions given and have further conversations about them at a later date.

SB5 – Finance – Russ Branson begins his finance report asking the council where are we not? Council and Robert Bobb Group have a brief conversation of where they believe financially they are right now. Mr. Branson goes over his presentation beginning with a chart showing the preset elements of financial condition, the future, and the current issues of the city. The current issues he highlights were lack of financial reporting leaves city in dark about its current cash capacity. City is spending down its cash with no plan to address working capital or crisis needs. No fund balance data, no cash to reinvest in city infrastructure. No ratings, no ability to tap into capital markets. Lastly, ACFR's missing from FY20 on, no historical consistent financial reporting to FIN. Comm. Or council. He goes over a cash flow through June 2025 chart stating the city needs to slow down spending, increase revenue and implement RAN's to improve. He speaks on the near-term issues to address in budget. He mentions the city needs to increase billing to pay operations and capital for coming year and eliminate automatic carryover of previously funded capital. Mr. Branson explains to council they need to build reserves by having a working capital to help with cash flow in

off tax months, reinvestment in city infrastructure and deferred maintenance, and a complete reserves study should be done to evaluate all city risks. He lets council know they need to re-establish credit in the capital markets, a working capital loans for revenue anticipation notes and issue dept. for WW and Sewer needs when able. He suggests that council develop a detailed financial plan for the next 3 to 5 years, showing operating cash flow, capital investment, debt issuance, and build reserves. Mr. Branson goes over the current fund operations and current revenue with council. He explains that increased taxes estimates from COR will help balance the budget for FY25. He goes into detail about regional water and what was spent. He shows 8.9 million over revenues in FY23 and forecast to be about 10 million over budget in FY24. His chart shows that Sewer and Solid waste are on track to pay for operations form user charges, schools used 1.1 M of ARPA funds in FY24, they also expect to have 4.2M in carryover from past years for grants that they are allowed to carryover for state building fund and state year round school grants. He provides a chart showing a cash position graph for council to view.

SB6 – Introduction to potential revenue sources – Mr. Russ Branson begins this presentation with a current tax rates grid for council to review. He gives numbers for Hopewell, Petersburg, Colonial Heights, and Richmond. Conversation takes place with council and Mr. Russ in reference to the difference between cities and counties and the difference in taxes for each. Further conversation takes place amongst council regarding the taxes and the difference between the other numbers provided from other cities. Mr. Russ goes over his slide related to potential cigarette tax and gives possible maximum tax amount. He gives the number of .02 per cigarette of .40 per pack. He then goes over how much taxes Petersburg brought in for the year FY23 and based on their number it was estimated that Hopewell would make approximately \$500,000.00 per year based on the population Hopewell has.

SB7 – Consolidation and Prioritization of FY25 Strategic Priorities – Mr. Bobb gives a very brief presentation asking council how can we engage the public more effectively. There was a discussion with council and the Robert Bobb Group in regards to this question. Council agrees they can engage with the public more and they can do so by listening to the citizens' complaints and concerns and trying their best to help. Councilors should assist within their ward and pass on issues of other wards to the councilor of that ward. He then asks what suggestions does council have to make council committees more effective? All council gave ideas and suggestions in regard to this

question, Mr. Bobb engaged in offering his suggestions and ideas as well.

SB8 – City of Hopewell Culture and Leadership expectations – Ms. Heather Ness begins this presentation with a slide referencing leadership engagement model. She mentions embracing change, having future focused goals, transparency in action, shared leadership, diverse voices, unified vision, cross-sector synergies, inclusive alliances, feedback-fueled growth, and proactive adaptability. Ms. Heather goes over five practices of effective leaders. Those five are to set clear expectations, foster collaboration, lead by example, encourage innovation, and provide feedback and support. Council and Heather have conversation regarding these 5 practices. Ms. Heather goes further into her presentation and goes further into detail about leadership, effective performance management, setting clear objectives, having feedback mechanisms, and recognition and rewards. She defines metrics, explains there should be continuous monitoring, and being capable of adaptation and growth. Using insights from performance data to inform leadership decisions and foster organizational growth. At the end of Heather’s presentation, there was the wrap it up portion, for questions, review of action items and next steps. Council engaged in further questions with the group and received feedback.

CLOSED MEETING:

Vice Mayor Gore makes a motion to go into closed meeting pursuant to VA Code § 2.2-3711(A)(1) “to discuss and consider personnel matters, including board and commission appointments; the assignment and performance of specific appointee and employees of City Council.” and to the extent such discussion will be aided thereby. Councilor Pelham seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL:

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

Motion Passes 6-0

RECONVENE OPEN MEETING:

Councilor Pelham moves to make a motion to reconvene open meeting.
Councilor Joyner seconds the motion.

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| ROLL CALL: | Councilor Harris | Excused |
| | Mayor Partin | Yes |
| | Vice Mayor Gore | Yes |
| | Councilor Denton | Excused |
| | Councilor Pelham | Yes |
| | Councilor Holloway | Yes |
| | Councilor Joyner | Yes |

Motion Passes 5-0

CERTIFICATION:

Immediately thereafter, council responded to the question pursuant to Virginia § 2.2-3712 (D): Were only public business matters (1) lawfully exempted from open-meeting requirements and (2) identified in the closed meeting motion discussed in closed meeting.

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| ROLL CALL: | Councilor Harris | Excused |
| | Mayor Partin | Yes |
| | Vice Mayor Gore | Yes |
| | Councilor Denton | Excused |
| | Councilor Pelham | Yes |
| | Councilor Holloway | Yes |
| | Councilor Joyner | Yes |

Motion Passes 5-0

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Denton motions to adjourn,

Yes 5

No 0

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

Brittani Williams, City Clerk

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

Johnny Partin, Mayor