

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

MEETING OF COUNCIL

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2019

Mayor Alexander called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. with the following members present: Mrs. Courtney R. Doyle, Mrs. Angelia Williams Graves, Mrs. Mamie B. Johnson, Mr. Paul R. Riddick, Mr. Tommy Smigiel and Mr. Martin Thomas Jr. Mrs. Andria P. McClellan was absent.

He then called on the City Manager to proceed with the agenda.

A. POP UP PRESENTATION

Wynter C. Benda, Chief Deputy City Manager, reported on the Ordinance for May 14th, regarding the rededication of a portion of Bluestone Avenue. No portion of Bluestone Avenue will be closed. Egress, traffic flow, and parking will remain as is.

B. BUDGET WORKSESSION #4

Douglas L. Smith, City Manager, introduced tonight's fourth budget work session. After Council's feedback from Budget Work Session 3, refinements were made.

- **BOAT TAX:**

After speaking with the Commissioner of the Revenue, Mr. Evans Poston, Mr. Smith suggested changes for this year, and working toward eliminating the tax next year, which is Council's goal.

Ms. Whitesell stated the boat license fee was going to be used to offset revenue loss, but Mr. Poston explained how that strategy would cause some boat owners to pay more. The recommendation is to drop the personal property tax rate from its current \$.50 to \$.25 per \$100 value; increase the boat license fee from its current \$10 to \$15 if boat is less than 16 feet long; and increase the boat license fee from \$25 to \$40 if it's 16 feet and longer. Ms. Whitesell presented a table showing its effects on current boat owners.

Mr. Smith discouraged Council from eliminating the license fee because we are the only city that can impose a license fee.

- CIP:

Funding in Improve Neighborhoods Citywide designated for Emerging Districts, approximately \$4.5 million - These are 35th Street, Park Place, Ocean View, Arts District, Church Street, Five Points and Broad Creek. Large projects such as Bay Oaks Park will show a breakdown of how money is spent.

- SIDEWALKS:

\$2.5 million for new sidewalks; \$1.3 million for maintenance. A breakdown of how the money will be spent and the locations will be provided by July 1st.

Mr. Smith stated Ordinances will be prepared and ready for Council's vote on the 14th.

C. ARTIST IN RESIDENCE UPDATE

City Manager Smith introduced Jason Akira Somma, Artist in Residence, and touched on his background and accomplishments. Mr. Akira Somma was born in Norfolk and is a graduate of the Governor's School for the Arts and Virginia Commonwealth University. He was the first American to receive the prestigious Rolex Arts Initiative Award for Dance and Visual Art. He has spent the last 20 years working as a technology and creative consultant for Walt Disney Imagineers, Glasgow University's Neuroscience Department, and the Times Square Alliance. In June, he will be the solo featured artist for the "Midnight Moment in Times Square."

Mr. Akira Somma stated a big aspect of his projects is in trying to show the artist in everyone and how art has the power to transform many things on social, civil, medical and scientific levels. Art can change people's perspectives and perceptions on what they think of their present environments and it can bridge communities. He next presented a commercial video that he shot, directed, edited, did special effects and wrote music for.

A second video was presented to introduce various ways of problem solving through art with concepts showing how we get people to engage and connect rather than just the use of printed media or documentation. He noted that the woman in the video is Carmen de Lavallade, who is one of the first African Americans to appear on television in an integrated setting.

Art and creative problem solving can achieve solutions. Mr. Akira Somma gave the example of foreseeing construction at Five Points:

- Create an inlaid LED system on the floor that people on their Smartphones can see the color of red or green before walking into the crosswalk. Drivers coming by will also be able to see and be aware of where the traffic flow is going.
- Using thermoplastic in the paint for the crosswalk to make it glow at night. The same could be done for bike paths. No electricity or energy would be needed. This could illuminate areas that might be dark. It would bring awareness and help to lower crime.
- Using paint on the crosswalk and rethinking the design. The design could be made three-dimensional bringing more awareness to the crosswalk. An optical illusion could be created, and this would also result in traffic calming.

Mr. Akira Somma stated that art bridges the gap between communities and creates social change. He reported on a large-scale project he did at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City in Manhattan, one of the largest venues for art in New York City. Unique flex dancers from Section 8 housing in East New York created a performance that council members and police commissioners attended. This opportunity resulted in a dialog that began between the two communities to help bridge the gap. This opportunity also resulted in an alternative career path for the dancers. This is another example of how engaging with art can help solve and address social issues.

Mr. Akira Somma reported on another project working with war torture survivors from Darfur and areas of Africa and the Middle East who were

living in political asylum in Ireland. Traditional therapy was not working, and he explored alternative therapies using movement and art therapy.

Mr. Akira Somma thanked City Council for allowing this progressive and amazing opportunity in Norfolk.

D. CLOSED SESSION

Motion for closed session was approved for purposes which are set out in

Clauses 1, 3 and 29 of subsection (A) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, as amended:

(1) Discussion of a personnel matter and board and commission appointment.

(3) Discussion of the disposition of publicly held real property in the Douglas Park Area where an open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating strategy of the public body.

(29) Discussion of the award of a public contract and the terms and scope of such contract.

Yes: Doyle, Graves, Johnson, Riddick, Smigiel, Thomas, and Alexander.

No: None.

Absent: McClellan

