

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

MEETING OF COUNCIL

TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2019

Mayor Alexander called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. with the following members present: Mrs. Courtney R. Doyle, Mrs. Angelia Williams Graves, Mrs. Mamie B. Johnson, Mrs. Andria P. McClellan, Mr. Tommy R. Smigiel Jr, and Mr. Martin A. Thomas Jr. Mr. Paul R. Riddick was absent.

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

A. PUBLIC SAFETY – NEIGHBORHOOD AND REGIONAL

Douglas L. Smith, City Manager, Michael G. Goldsmith, Deputy City Manager

and Larry D. Boone, Chief of Police, reported the following:

Mr. Smith stated after recent events in Virginia Beach and Norfolk, both due to gun violence, security policies and procedures are being reviewed. He noted that Governor Northam has called for a special session of the General Assembly to address gun violence regionally. He added that we are doing everything we can to support Virginia Beach. Our organization is also grieving, and four sites have been set up in Norfolk for grief counseling. Mr. Smith next called upon City Council for opening comments.

Mayor Alexander thanked City Council, the City Manager, and Team Norfolk for standing against violence and crime in Norfolk and throughout cities in Hampton Roads and beyond. He commented on the “Stop the Violence” rally that he and Councilwoman Graves attended yesterday. He recommended City Council pass a resolution supporting Governor Northam’s efforts.

Mayor Alexander called for a moment of silence to reflect on all violence throughout the region and beyond.

Vice Mayor Thomas echoed Mayor Alexander’s recommendation for a resolution supporting Governor Northam’s efforts for sensible and reasonable gun control.

Councilwoman Doyle expressed support for the resolution. She added we need to talk to our local elected representatives in Richmond and in Washington, as well.

Councilwoman Johnson thanked Councilwoman Graves and Team Norfolk for assisting with the 32 preschoolers who came to City Hall on May 17th to learn about local government. She stated on Friday, June 7th, a group of scholars from Virginia Beach will be coming to City Hall. She invited members of Council to join her in welcoming them.

Councilwoman Graves expressed support for the resolution. She suggested that we need to do a better job in our higher crime areas in making sure every household with children is made aware of the programs and opportunities that are available. She noted there are recreation centers open until 2 a.m.; summer programs; and other non-profit agencies have programs for youth.

Councilwoman McClellan expressed support for the resolution. She stated she recently visited Merrimac Landing Recreation Center and noted that programming is a challenge there. She stated that many recreation centers now have Wi-Fi, but they also need more computers. She added that another challenge is transportation. She suggested partnering with HRT and/or FRED to provide transportation to and from the recreation center. She stated we need to do a better job of connecting citizens with mentoring and volunteer opportunities. Councilwoman Graves suggested forming partnerships with businesses who are willing to donate computers and mentoring.

Councilman Smigiel echoed support for the resolution. He commended our colleagues in Virginia Beach and Team Norfolk for their support and efforts. He commented that schools have a policy of "If You See Something, Say Something," but it does not carry into the communities. He stated that the juvenile justice system is too lenient on our youth and there must be accountability and consequences. He suggested that we need more programs like the "Scared Straight Program."

Chief Boone stated there has been an increase in violent crime in May, particularly surrounding our youth. He reiterated our youth have easy access to guns, which has been this way for years and something must be done about that.

A gun study was conducted in 2017 and the data showed where these guns are purchased and whose hands, they end up in. He stressed that poverty and guns equals conflict, whether it's Norfolk or any other urban setting in this country. The department's focus has been on getting guns out of the hands of our youth. Successes are little to none because we are dealing with youth who do not leave a pattern. The reality is there are just so many guns which is very challenging for the police department.

Chief Boone stated he supports Governor Northam's efforts for stricter gun laws. He noted the department is in the early stages of introducing a new program to address youth violence. He added that states that have implemented stricter control measures have shown significant reduction of violence and particularly gun violence.

Mr. Goldsmith stated that we continue to enhance our organizational safety and security with what is termed "P2R2" which means Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. Each subheading has activities associated with it.

PREVENTION/MITIGATION

We've conducted physical security reviews for city facilities and will continue doing that. The Department of Homeland Security is assessing our buildings and how it compares to similarly situated buildings doing the same type of business we do. Results will guide us in building our security strategies for all city buildings.

All city employees now wear ID badges and citizens doing business in the building are required to present an ID and issued a visitor's badge.

Procedural security is making sure all employees know what it means to be secure. We don't leave doors unlocked; we don't let people tailgate behind us into the building through the employee entrance; we secure our computers and things that need to be secured. All of that is the human factors part of what we're doing to make sure that we stay safe.

We are also reviewing our Human Resource policies. We want to ensure we do a complete policy review when it comes to workplace violence, how we treat each other, and all those types of issues.

RESPONSE

Police, fire, and emergency management. Chief Boone, Chief Brooks, and Mr. Redick have been training for active threat response since Columbine. The Fire Department is now training rescue task force procedures. Our fire fighters and paramedics are now outfitted with gear that will enable them to render first aid to the injured. They enter with the police as they are securing areas and still trying to engage with whatever suspect is in the building. We are one of the first communities in this area, if not in the nation, to employ this.

RECOVERY

This is addressing the physical building, operations, and most importantly people and making sure they can adequately get the help that they need to be able to deal with the trauma associated with an event.

PREPAREDNESS

We've given training to our employees which includes active threat response; run, hide, fight scenarios. Training also includes Stop the Bleed and CPR. Mr. Smith is now making this training mandatory for all employees.

Councilwoman McClellan relayed that Norfolk Southern starts their meetings by stating who the Safety Chief is, who is AED certified, and they identify all the exits. She suggested this might be something to consider for city meetings. Councilwoman Doyle added at Sentara they start meetings with a safety story, which speaks to the heroics of what has happened in the organization and how people have saved lives.

Councilwoman Graves suggested locating city offices that conduct the most business with citizens be located on the lower floors of City Hall. She added that swipe cards could be used for access to the upper floors. Mr. Goldsmith stated they are in the process of putting together an RFP for a security consultant to address security strategies. Councilwoman Graves commented that employees visiting other city employees should instead meet in a commons area on the first floor or in the alternative check in with the receptionist of an office and be escorted to the employee they are going to visit.

Councilman Smigiel reiterated his request for an “ombudsman” type position so employees can go to this impartial individual confidentially with a grievance or a problem. He also asked if our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is being promoted and if it is adequately staffed to handle those types of issues. Councilwoman Johnson echoed Councilman Smigiel’s recommendation for an ombudsman position.

Councilwoman Johnson expressed concern about citizens parking in the circle in front of City Hall. They do not use a parking space and many times it creates a traffic jam. Also, she asked that when a visitor checks in with security, they need to give a reason why they are here rather than security suggesting to them where they might be going. For example, if there is a City Planning Commission meeting on that day, security should not say “Are you here for the City Planning Commission meeting” but let the visitor state their purpose for being in the building.

Councilwoman Graves asked that employees be allowed to use their annual leave and sick leave as needed. She noted that sometimes there is a culture of making it difficult for employees to take time off. She added that sometimes people need mental health days.

B. PLANNING UPDATE

George M. Homewood, Director of Planning, reported and updated Council on the following upcoming items:

Mr. Homewood updated Council on upcoming items:

Items on the City Planning Commission agenda June 27th
(Items will come before City Council in July or August).

SYCAMORE PLAZA

This project is at Wilson Road and Indian River Road. The proposal is to rezone the property and have a Conditional Use Permit for a residential, mixed-use development. There will be four separate buildings, three will have a mixed-use component and one will be a row of townhouse style apartments at the very rear of the property.

ANDALOUSI

This is a former church located on Bowdens Ferry Road that was proposed to be a banquet hall two years ago. That request was denied by City Council. This proposal has changed and in significant ways. They will only operate on weekends and the hours would be 4 p.m. to 12 a.m. on Friday; 3 p.m. to 12 a.m. on Saturday; and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sunday. All parking will be by valet. There will be no on-street parking throughout the neighborhood.

EDC

This is for a change of zoning at Fisherman's Road and Chesapeake Boulevard. The site is a former church that has been condemned due to black mold. The building cannot be reused and must be demolished. EDC is proposing to rezone the property and build 18 townhomes. This is at the intersection of three civic leagues and one of the civic leagues has issued a letter of opposition because they believe this site would be better served as commercial space rather than residential.

Mr. Homewood noted this year the General Assembly made a substantial change to the legislation dealing with the acceptance of proffers for residential. That will be coming forward to Council with a recommendation to accept residential proffers.

PENDING PLANNING ITEMS

- June 11th - Colonial Place/Riverview Neighborhood Resilience Overlay
- July 9th - Biophilic Cities Resolution/Membership
- July 23rd - Wards Corner Plan
- July 23rd - Residential Proffers
- August 27th - Commercial and Mixed-Use Pattern Book
- n/a - Downtown Outdoor Dining Guidelines

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

- Census Complete Count Committee Meeting June 20th at 6 p.m.
- Commercial Pattern Book presentation to ULI June 20th at 3:30 p.m.

DOCKET ITEMS FOR JUNE 25TH:

La Yaroa Tropical Restaurant -

The property is located on the east side of North Military Highway and north of Robin Hood Road. The proposal is to allow an existing restaurant to operate as a nightclub. The property is zoned C-C (Community-Commercial) and allows nightclub by Conditional Use Permit. The applicant is currently operating as a restaurant with on-premises alcohol sales, closing by 11 p.m. The proposal is to add entertainment, with a DJ/dance floor and late hours. Landscaping and site improvements to be installed within six months of approval. Some residents were concerned that allowing this operation will result in repetition of issues caused by previous operators at this location. Planning staff recommends approval. The City Planning Commission recommended approval by a vote of 3-1.

Brinshore Development

This is the first project in the St. Paul's CNI Plan. The property is located next to the Fire Station, behind the Downtown Transportation Center. Planning staff recommends approval; City Planning Commission recommends approval.

YWCA

The property is located at 2333 Ballentine Boulevard. The proposal is to operate an assisted living facility. The SF-T (Single-Family Traditional) requires a Conditional Use Permit to change from one nonconforming (Daycare Center, Adult) use to another nonconforming use (Assisted Housing). The site was developed as a nursing home and the existing structure cannot be reused as a single-family home. There are conditions in place to better ensure compatibility with the neighborhood. Planning staff recommends approval. The City Planning Commission recommended denial by a vote of 3-1. Their vote was based on neighborhood concerns.

C. HARBORFEST 2019 UPDATE

Karen Scherberger, Chief Executive Officer, Festevents, stated that Norfolk Harborfest continues to be not only the largest public event in Norfolk and in the region but one of the largest events in the state and on the east coast. It is also the longest running free maritime festival in the nation.

This year they have expanded their entertainment and programming to include more diverse and trending features while still celebrating our historic traditions. They are describing Harborfest this year as “HIPstoric.” There will be lasers, lighting effects, LED video walls, a drone show, and EDM (electric dance music). There will also be live entertainment and Saturday night fireworks. There will be more than 50 outdoor chefs as well as fun events for families.

A brief video was presented.

In keeping with the Mayor’s State of the City address, they have leveraged this energy to create and promote many of Norfolk’s unique experiences. This includes over 53 restaurants; six residential apartment properties are having an open house; and a special business appreciation luncheon. There are events such as First Fridays, The Lion King performances, a vintage Sunday event, and much more.

Harborfest and weekend events has been heavily marketed with radio and print. There are over 500 tabletop markers throughout downtown; street flags; video walls at Nauticus, Waterside, Scope; and extensive social media. This year they are introducing a free hop-on hop-off shuttle that will move people from the NEON District to the waterfront, with stops at the PLOT, Chrysler Hall, MacArthur Center, Granby Street, Freemason Harbor and the waterfront. A marketing package will be sent to City Council.

Following last year’s Harborfest, in recognizing the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans to Virginia, they wanted to ensure that all residents and visitors experience Norfolk as inclusive, diverse, authentic and welcoming. Along with Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Dean of Liberal Arts and History professor at Norfolk State University, they are developing and implementing a 14-month action plan to research and produce an educational brochure and video documentary. They will report back to Council with updates as this project progresses.

D. CLOSED SESSION

Motion for closed session was approved for purposes which are set out in **Clause(s) 19 and 29** of subsection (A) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, as amended:

(19) Discussion of plans to protect public safety as it relates to vulnerabilities in the Magistrate's Office.

(29) Discussion of contract terms where public discussion would adversely affect the bargaining position of the Public body.

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

No: None.

Absent: Riddick.