

**City of New Bern  
Board of Aldermen Work Session  
February 16, 2018 – 1:00 p.m.  
Development Services' Conference Room  
303 First Street**

**Roll Call:** Present: Mayor Dana Outlaw; Aldermen Sabrina Bengel (arrived at 1:14 p.m.), Jameesha Harris, Robert Aster, Johnnie Ray Kinsey, Barbara Best, and Jeffrey Odham. Absent: None. A quorum was present.

**Also in Attendance:** Mark Stephens, City Manager; Kristen Culler, Assistant City Manager; Brenda Blanco, City Clerk; Robert Boyd, Fire Chief; Avery Smith, Stormwater Superintendent; Jordan Hughes, City Engineer; and J.R. Sabatelli, Director of Finance.

Mayor Outlaw opened the meeting with prayer. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

**1. Discussion of Fire Response.**

Chief Boyd opened by stating the department's number one goal is fire prevention, not response. He reviewed a PowerPoint presentation which included a map of the City's first-due response areas, a comparison of the department to other benchmark cities, recommended acceptable response times, and actual response times. Since 2012, 66% of the City's new residential growth is located within the response area of the Thurman Road station and 61% of the new commercial property is located within the response area of the Elizabeth Avenue station.

Chief Boyd reviewed steps that have been taken to improve response times, which include development of standard operating procedures, installation of countdown clocks to help with accountability and turnout time, periodic drills, etc. He also reviewed additional measures that have been investigated for future use, such as pre-emption devices for the major traffic areas of MLK Boulevard, South Glenburnie Road, and Highway 70E. Even with all of these operational efficiencies, Chief Boyd states there are still areas of the city that are under served. He emphasized it is up to leadership to determine what response times are acceptable, which in turn will dictate what additional steps, if any, need to be implemented. The National Fire Protection Association's ("NFPA") recommended response time is 8 minutes for second due.

A handout was distributed showing the cost effect of potential options to improve response times. Those options varied among purchasing additional engines, increasing personnel, the purchase of pre-emption devices, and construction of a fourth station. While Chief Boyd is concerned with the entire city, he acknowledged a need for a station in the Pleasant Hill community near Hwy. 17-S/43 and a second-due engine at the Thurman Road station. He noted he is quite concerned with the impending construction in the James City area. Alderman Aster suggested moving forward on the Thurman Road location and then starting the design phase of a new

station for the Pleasant Hill community. The options were discussed at length, along with the perceived needs.

The Fire Department has received 260 calls year to date, according to Chief Boyd. Alderman Odham said he felt a key piece of information that is still needed is how many of those calls were actual structure fires. He pointed out the amount of tax increase needed to pay for each option presented by staff: option 1 would require a 3¢ tax increase, option 2 and 2b would require a .2¢ increase each, option 3 an almost 3¢ increase, and option 4 would require a 4¢ tax increase. Mayor Outlaw asked about looking into the possibility of obtaining a “canned” architectural design for a fire station in lieu of starting from scratch, which should yield cost savings. He also asked if anyone had looked at Sanford and their use of part-time firefighters or considered any other options outside of those presented. Alderman Aster noted the City tried to hire part-time firefighters just a few years ago, but there was no interest.

Those who would support a \$50,000 architectural study were asked to raise their hands. A show of hands revealed support from all Board members with the exception of Alderman Odham. Alderman Bengel recommended the needs of the Thurman Road area be addressed. Alderman Aster pointed out the Fire Department has submitted budget requests over the last several years to fund some of the options, and he suggested those requests again be included in the budget for consideration. Mayor Outlaw requested 3-5 year revenue projections from ad valorem taxes, which could be used to offset costs.

**NOTE:** A brief break was taken from 3:27 p.m. to 3:35 p.m. Alderman Kinsey left at 3:27 p.m.

## **2. Discussion of Stormwater Utility.**

Mr. Stephens shared a PowerPoint presentation that systematically reviewed the stormwater utility. Functions of the division were discussed, as well as staffing levels. Avery Smith, Stormwater Superintendent, was in attendance and introduced to the Board by Mr. Stephens. The City is split into four zones and contains 130 miles of pipes and ditches with 4,000 access points. This yields more maintenance than staff can cover in one year.

The stormwater fund was created in 2012 and generates approximately \$670,000 annually. The residential rate is \$2.10 per month, and multifamily is \$1.58 per month. Commercial properties are charged at a different rate based upon their impervious area. Mr. Stephens reviewed how this revenue will be spent in Fiscal Year 2018. A very limited amount of revenue is set aside annually for stormwater improvements.

For Fiscal Year 2018, the Board approved \$1.5 million in stormwater improvements. These funds will be secured through an installment purchase loan and repaid through the General Fund. Plans for improvements were briefly discussed, including

those in the Jack Smith Creek area that will be addressed with bridge alterations at the time street improvements are made.

Current stormwater issues were identified by Mr. Stephens. These issues will continue to be addressed as funding allows. Various financial options were reviewed for addressing the issues, including the possibility of raising the stormwater fee. Alderman Odham suggested finding out how much it would cost to repair the issues, how much money can be borrowed and for how long, what the annual debt service would be and take that away from the current budget. This would allow the City to actually fix the problems instead of making improvements little by little. Alderman Bengel asked about utilizing a bond to pay for this, and Mr. Stephens explained the difference between Revenue Bonds and General Obligation Bonds ("GO Bonds"). Mr. Sabatelli stated if the Board wanted to proceed with a GO Bond, staff would need to know today as it is an 11-month process that would require the public's vote in November.

Mr. Stephens shared a comparison of New Bern's stormwater fee to not only benchmark cities, but also other stormwater utility fees in North Carolina. He provided a table to reflect the impact of increasing the current fee from \$2.10 to various amounts between \$3.00 and \$4.00. Current rates have not been increased since their inception in 2012. If rates are not raised, staff cannot do more than it is currently doing to address stormwater. Alderman Odham suggested pursuing a GO Bond for only stormwater improvements, and based upon that outcome gauge whether or not to pursue a bond in the following year for other items. Alderman Bengel asked for staff to figure out what it would cost for the projects, how much money can be borrowed, and how the City would pay for it. Based on that information, the Board can make a decision about the stormwater fee. Mr. Stephens said he and Mr. Sabatelli would crunch numbers based on a project list as well as lending ability as far as time and how much that equates to in a per annum cost.

Alderman Odham suggested the budget meetings be held during the day or over a couple of afternoons, and Alderman Bengel expressed agreement. Alderman Bengel asked if a revised date has been set for the redevelopment work session. Mr. Stephens stated he would email the Board a list of dates the School of Government representatives are available.

### **3. Adjourn.**

Alderman Aster made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Harris. The motion carried, time being 4:46 p.m.

The attached documents are incorporated herewith and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

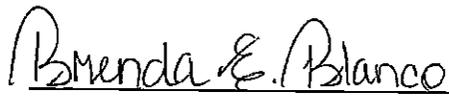
NOTE: For additional details and information on the Board of Aldermen meetings, please visit the City of New Bern's website at [www.newbern-nc.org](http://www.newbern-nc.org). Video and audio recordings of the meeting have been archived.

Minutes approved: March 13, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana E. Outlaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D".

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Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda E. Blanco". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

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Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk