

**City of New Bern
Board of Aldermen Meeting
April 13, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
Craven Community College – Orringer Auditorium
800 College Court**

- 1. Meeting opened by Mayor Dana E. Outlaw. Prayer by Alderman Barbara Best. Pledge of Allegiance.**

- 2. Roll Call.**

Present: Mayor Dana Outlaw, Alderman Sabrina Bengel, Alderwoman Jameesha Harris, Alderman Robert Aster, Alderman Johnnie Ray Kinsey, Alderman Barbara Best, and Alderman Jeffrey Odham. Absent: None. A quorum was present.

Also Present: Mark Stephens, City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

- 3. Request and Petition of Citizens.**

There were no requests and petitions of citizens.

Consent Agenda

- 4. Consider Accepting a Petition to Annex Property Identified as Tax Parcel IDs 8-206-132 and 8-206-133 and Adopting a Resolution to Call for a Public Hearing on the Annexation.**

Goshen Medical Center requested to annex property known as Tax Parcel IDs 8-206-132 and 8-206-133. The property is located on Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard near Ben D. Quinn Elementary School. It was requested a public hearing be set for April 27, 2021 to receive comments on the request.

- 5. Consider Accepting a Petition to Annex 3412 Old Airport Road and Adopting a Resolution to Call for a Public Hearing on the Annexation.**

Barbara Fulcher requested to annex her property at 3412 Old Airport Road. It was requested a public hearing be set for April 27, 2021 to receive comments on the request.

- 6. Presentation of Appearance Commission Annual Report and Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving an Updated Mission Statement.**

As required by Section 15-38(d) of the City's Land Use Ordinance and NC General Statute 160A-454, the Appearance Commission must submit to the Board of

Aldermen no later than April 15th of each year a written report of its activities. The report was provided to the Board and required no action. A resolution was also presented to update the Commission's mission statement.

7. Approve Minutes.

Draft minutes from the March 23, 2021 regular meeting and April 05, 2021 special meeting were provided for review and approval.

Alderman Odham made a motion to approve Items 4-7 of the Consent Agenda, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

8. Presentation on Volt Center.

Dr. Ray Staats, President of Craven Community College, shared an overview of the Volt Center and its campus. The trades building was put into use two years ago and initially taught five programs. The number of programs has now increased, and the total number of people who have completed a program is 1,040. Of those, 639 of the students had New Bern addresses and 205 (20.2%) resided in the Trent Court, Pembroke, Five Points or Oaks Road neighborhoods. This has been the targeted area because the neighborhoods are within walking distance. It was confirmed that 201 of those students received job offers. In addition to the trades building, the campus now includes a small business center, diesel garage, and law enforcement training facility.

Dr. Staats shared a proposal for the next phase of the campus. He stated two years ago, the College met with owners of six restaurants to discuss their training challenges. Those challenges have been exacerbated by COVID-19. The New Bern Chamber of Commerce is reconvening the group, and the College will look at programs to meet the local needs of restaurants. The proposal for the next phase included an expansion for a Restaurant Operations program to be conducted in the original incubator kitchen. The kitchen would also be used as a learning lab for a Restaurant Operations certification program.

Mr. Stephens reviewed the original proposal for the project, which was significantly funded by an EDA grant and included a commercial commissary kitchen. He announced the EDA had verbally indicated their willingness to modify the scope of the original grant terms. He then sought direction on how to proceed: pursue the partnership with the College or continue on the original path.

Alderwoman Harris questioned whether a prior meeting had been held to discuss changing the vision for the site, and she inquired about the entrepreneur side of moving forward with the city market and food trucks. Mr. Stephens stated the College had funding and the ability to install kitchen equipment, market the

program, and provide instructors. Alderwoman Harris felt there was a need for individuals to have a location and outlet for their food trucks. She stated because of last year's controversy, there was a hold on things and the NC Tobacco Trust grant was lost. Alderman Best felt the market would be ideal to have, stating it would serve the inner city and some of the challenged neighborhoods.

Alderman Bengel confirmed with Dr. Staats that the City would have no funds involved in the proposal and that the College would fully equip the kitchen. She pointed out that the proposal would only involve the kitchen facility, not the market area, and she emphasized the need for trained restaurant workers. She stated if there was an opportunity to grow the Volt Center with training programs and help people get jobs then the City needed to do that. Alderwoman Harris expressed concern about creating a catalyst kitchen when there were other plans for one, and she stressed the need to progress the community and entrepreneurship. She also felt the community needed to be involved in the discussions. Alderman Best stated she thought the original plans were still on track and had been delayed because of COVID, and she questioned why the delay prompted a change of plans.

Alderman Odham asked for clarification of the proposal, and Dr. Staats confirmed the proposal involved Item 6 on his handout. Alderman Odham then inquired as to what had changed from the original intent for Item 6 and what was being asked for at this time. Mr. Stephens stated essentially the original vision was for a commissary kitchen that would serve as a prep location for entrepreneur food trucks. Amanda Ohlensehlen, Community & Economic Development Manager, reiterated the original intent was to open a kitchen commissary space for food service and food truck entrepreneurs. In previous grants that were written, workforce training and development courses were a part of the applications. Mrs. Ohlensehlen stated all hospitality establishments and restaurants in the region were struggling. She confirmed if the kitchen were in place, food trucks could use the facility to prepare their items. However, the College's program could not support for-profit businesses. If the original vision were pursued, it would need to be funded through grants or City funds. Additional grant opportunities will become available in the spring. Previous grants sought included the Tobacco Foundation, which was unfunded, and the Cannon Foundation.

Alderman Odham said the trade off would be a "community kitchen" that a food entrepreneur could use to prepare food for sale versus a training facility operated by the College. Mrs. Ohlensehlen confirmed this and stated if the College leased the space, it would be used strictly for training and would not include the commissary component.

Dr. Staats stated the largest entrepreneur training in Craven County is the College's Small Business Center. The College can operate the kitchen and train an entrepreneur in food preparation, etc., but the collaboration would stop when the training turns to a for-profit operation. After training, the kitchen could not sustain the entrepreneur once they were on their feet and operating.

If the kitchen is used in a commissary manner, Mr. Stephens noted it would require someone to manage it and ensure that it is cleaned properly and meets all health requirements. He felt staff had worked hard to make the vision work, yet the facility had sat empty for two years. When asked, Mrs. Ohlensehlen said the kitchen equipment and installation was quoted at around \$200,000. Alderwoman Harris felt it was the responsibility of the City to create opportunities and fulfill its original vision. She felt it was possible to partner with the College to have training two to three days a week while still having a marketplace and creating jobs.

Mayor Outlaw asked Dr. Staats to explain what was happening statewide with workforce development versus what was happening in the New Bern area as a result of the existing partnership. Because the College had the Volt Center space, Dr. Staats said the College was not facing layoffs. Instead of declining, its enrollment in workforce development was estimated to go up this year by more than 5%. He announced some colleges had seen a 70% decline. Craven Community College is one of 11 out of the state's 58 community colleges that has a positive number.

Alderman Bengel reflected upon the successful results from what the College had done with the Volt Center. She stated hospitality was the number two industry in Craven County and felt it important to have a great training program for that industry. She felt the partnership between the City and College was a good one and expressed a desire to move forward.

Alderwoman Harris felt because of the issues with the grant, which everyone was aware of, Development Services' staff was not given a proper opportunity to do what was needed to benefit the community. She expressed confusion as to why the Board was not provided information in the proposal prior to the meeting. She also voiced a desire for a second farmer's market and did not want to leave entrepreneurs out of any vision the City may have for growth within that community.

Mr. Stephens said he needed direction on whether to stay the course and seek grants to continue down the path of the original EDA scope of work or modify the plan to allow the College to take the lead and use the facility. If the decision is to modify the plan, Dr. Staats felt the College could be up and running by late summer with the first courses underway in August or September. Alderwoman Harris said she did not understand why the City could not stand behind the community and put \$200,000 in the project to pursue the original plan. Alderman Best questioned how soon the original vision could be up and running if the City could allocate \$200,000 and what problems were foreseen as far as making the vision come to fruition. Mrs. Ohlensehlen said in addition to the capital expenses for equipment, parttime or contract staff would also be needed to manage and oversee the kitchen. She also stated staff had a good lead on a potential \$75,000 grant for capital. There would be ongoing costs for equipment maintenance, cleaning, and staff. Alderwoman Harris asked whether the fees for use would cover those costs. While unlikely the first many years, Mrs. Ohlensehlen said the goal would be for the facility to be self-supporting.

Alderman Aster made a motion to authorize the City Manager to work with Craven Community College to form an agreement for a lease of building 6 for a commercial kitchen, seconded by Alderman Bengel. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried 4-3 with Aldermen Best, Kinsey and Harris voting against it.

Prior to the motion being seconded, Alderman Best asked if a lease would hinder the City from pursuing its original program. Dr. Staats responded the terms of the lease could be renegotiated as conditions evolve, but as far as the commissary kitchen, the State Board's policy would not likely change. The College would be prohibited from renegotiating that component. Alderwoman Harris felt the City was rushing to make a decision, and she again questioned why the City could not fund the project itself to help create jobs. Noting the Volt Center's history, Alderman Aster felt the Center would create jobs. Prior to casting her vote, Alderman Best stated although she felt the College would do an excellent job, she felt the Board would be doing a great disservice to the citizens of Wards 1, 2 and 5 by not allowing a farmer's market, entrepreneurship opportunities, and all the other programs in the initial plan. She felt the Board should have had additional meetings before receiving the presentation and being put in a position where it was required to vote on the topic.

9. Presentation on American Rescue Plan Funding.

Mr. Stephens announced the City would receive a total of \$6.5 million from the American Rescue Plan funding ("ARP"), with receipt of \$3.25 million anticipated in May. Mary Hogan, Director of Finance, shared a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the comprehensive plan and reviewing how the funds could be utilized. Local government aid is one small piece of the federal bill and falls under Title IX. This is the first time in history when the federal government has made a direct payment to local governments. As indicated by Mr. Stephens, Mrs. Hogan confirmed the City would receive 50% of its funding in May and the remaining 50% next May. The City will have until December 31, 2024 to spend the funds, and Mrs. Hogan reviewed the acceptable uses. She stated the funding was intended to bring the City government operation to whole from any downsides that occurred during COVID. The four areas in which the City can spend the funding are: 1) coronavirus response and relief (similar to the CARES Act funds), 2) higher wages for public employees up to an additional \$13 per hour per worker, 3) replacement revenue to make up for loss revenue due to COVID-19, and 4) investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Alderman Bengel asked whether staff currently had a plan for use of the funds. Mr. Stephens said ultimately the decision would need to be made by the Board, and staff would approach the Board for input. Alderwoman Harris suggested the City set up a new endowment for nonprofit grants, give employees a bonus, replace any lost revenues, and invest in broadband. She felt the funds should not be used for water and sewer infrastructure and suggested the City consider funding that need at its April 16, 2021 work session. If funds are used to offset projects the City had

already planned to undertake, she recommended ARP funding be available to help homeowners with affordable housing needs and home repairs. Alderman Aster suggested the funding also be used to assist employees with the cost of healthcare insurance, if needed.

Alderwoman Harris suggested three of the Board members meet with staff to discuss possibilities for funding issues related to affordable housing. Scott Davis, City Attorney, said there are programs that may permit the City to provide low-interest loans. Alderman Best concurred with the need to address housing and the four suggestions made by Alderwoman Harris, but she cautioned that more details were needed about the restrictions on the funding.

10. Consider Adopting a Resolution Requesting the NC Department of Transportation Repave Simmons Street.

The condition of Simmons Street, particularly between Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard and Neuse Boulevard, is poor and in need of resurfacing. The area between Trent Boulevard and Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard is also in need of attention, though its condition is not as poorly deteriorated. This street is owned and maintained by the NC Department of Transportation (“NCDOT”), and the proposed resolution requests NCDOT to mill and repave it. Notably, the portion of Simmons Street that connects Neuse Boulevard to Oaks Road was repaved by NCDOT a couple of years ago. Jordan Hughes, City Engineer, recently advised Mr. Stephens that there were significant sewer connections along the street, and he would suggest the City be allowed to make improvements to the connections prior to the repaving.

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt a resolution requesting the NCDOT repave Simmons Street, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

While he was in favor of the repaving, Alderman Aster felt there was a slim chance of Simmons Street being repaved anytime soon. He felt all the money being used to buyout business properties for the “superhighway” in James City could be more appropriately used for paving streets throughout North Carolina.

11. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving a Sewer Use Agreement for 3412 Old Airport Road.

Barbara Fulcher, owner of 3412 Old Airport Road, requested to connect to the City’s sewer system. The property is an existing single-family residence currently outside of the city limits. The residence will have a calculated average daily sewer demand of 360 gallons per day, which would require a standard sewer service connection. Section 74-74 of the City’s ordinances provides that a written sewer use agreement be entered into to outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties in establishing service.

Alderman Aster made a motion to adopt a resolution approving a sewer use agreement for 3412 Old Airport Road, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

12. Consider Adopting a Resolution to Initiate the Upset Bid Process for 125 Hillmont Road.

Derek and Natalie Jenette submitted an offer of \$7,500 to purchase the vacant, nearly ½-acre lot at 125 Hillmont Road. The tax value of the property is \$15,000, and the offer represents 50% of the value. The property was acquired by the City and County in May 2019 through tax foreclosure. The unpaid taxes at that time were \$6,349.65. If the property is sold for the initial bid, the City is projected to receive \$3,244.62 and the County is projected to receive \$4,255.28 from the proceeds. Although their property is not contiguous, Mr. and Mrs. Jenette live near the subject property and simply seek to enlarge their outdoor space.

Alderman Bengel expressed concern that the property was not contiguous with the bidders' property. Alderman Best said the bidder has a lot of equipment, and she assumed he would use 125 Hillmont Road to store some of his vehicles and equipment. The property is currently overgrown, and Alderman Best said she was in favor of the bid if that meant someone would be maintaining it and paying taxes. Jeff Ruggieri, Director of Development Services, explained accessory uses of property and that storage would not be an allowable primary use of the property. Alderman Best stated she would contact the bidder to discuss his intended use of the property and ascertain his desire to move further.

(Alderman Kinsey momentarily stepped out of the room at 7:43 p.m.)

Alderman Best made a motion to table the item until the next meeting, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

Items 13 and 14 were voted on collaboratively as noted under Item 14.

13. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving Additional Streetlight on Kensington Park Drive.

Mrs. O'Neil of 3682 Neuse Boulevard requested additional streetlighting in the area of Kensington Park Drive. Staff evaluated the request and determined the area does not meet the City's light standard and recommended the addition of two streetlights. The installation of the lights will cost \$1,169.31, and the monthly utility charge for service will be \$16.88.

14. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving Additional Streetlight on College Street.

Jermaine Smith of 2005 College Street requested an additional streetlight on College Street. Staff evaluated the request and determined the area does not meet

the City's light standard and recommended the addition of one streetlight. The installation of the light will cost \$671.34, and the monthly utility charge for service will be \$8.44.

Alderman Harris made a motion to adopt resolutions approving additional streetlights on Kensington Park Drive and College Street, seconded by Alderman Best. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0. Of note, Alderman Kinsey had momentarily stepped out of the room, thus technically yielding an affirmative vote.

15. Appointment(s).

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to reappoint Gary Lingman to the Friends of New Bern Firemen's Museum Board of Directors, seconded by Alderman Aster. The motion carried unanimously 7-0. Of note, Alderman Kinsey had momentarily stepped out of the room, thus technically yielding an affirmative vote. Mr. Lingman will serve a three-year term to expire on April 22, 2024.

Alderman Aster made a motion to reappoint David Pickens to the Friends of New Bern Firemen's Museum Board of Directors, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously 7-0. Of note, Alderman Kinsey had momentarily stepped out of the room, thus technically yielding an affirmative vote. Mr. Pickens will serve a three-year term to expire on April 22, 2024.

Mayor Outlaw made a motion to reappoint Bill Frederick to the Friends of New Bern Firemen's Museum Board of Directors, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 7-0. Of note, Alderman Kinsey had momentarily stepped out of the room, thus technically yielding an affirmative vote. Mr. Frederick will serve a three-year term to expire on April 22, 2024.

(Alderman Kinsey returned to the room at 7:47 p.m.)

16. Attorney's Report.

The City Attorney had nothing to report.

17. City Manager's Report.

- Mr. Stephens reminded the Board of the work session called for Friday, April 16, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. The meeting will be located at Development Services' Conference Room to discuss potential bond financing of capital improvement projects.
- With renovation of the City Hall courtroom still underway, it is necessary to also conduct the next two meetings offsite. Alderman Bengel made a motion to hold the April 27, 2021 and May 11, 2021 meetings at Craven Community College's Orringer Hall beginning at 6 p.m., seconded by Alderman Odham. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

- At Alderman Bengel's request, Mr. Stephens provided an update on the FEMA claims. He briefly reviewed the claims for the BP station, Stanley White Recreation Center, and the stormwater projects. Alderman Aster added a notation that FEMA had just asked questions about the City Hall mitigation project, which indicates that they had reviewed some of the documents.

18. New Business.

Mayor Outlaw

Danny Meadows, former Public Works Director, was in attendance and recognized. Noting that Mr. Meadows had been under the weather recently, the Mayor stated it was nice to see him out in public again.

Alderman Aster

Matt Montanye, Director of Public Works, was given a round of applause after it was announced he would be leaving to take a position in Georgia.

Alderwoman Harris

The collaboration for Juneteenth events is underway. Information can be obtained on the Juneteenth of New Bern website or by contacting Talina Massey or Alderwoman Harris.

Alderman Bengel

Outdoor street dining resumed this past weekend in the downtown area. Not all restaurants are participating due to staffing issues.

The Flame's Chef Smoke, who is also this year's Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, has called a meeting for 2 p.m. on April 21, 2021 for all restaurant owners to gather and form a restaurant council. The council will discuss issues restaurants are facing such as the supply chain, staffing and employees.

19. Closed Session.

A closed session was not needed.

20. Adjourn.

Alderman Odham made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 7:55 p.m.

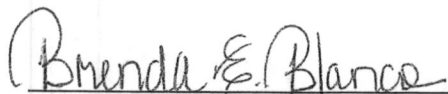
The attached documents are incorporated herewith and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

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. Video and audio recordings of the meeting have been archived.

Minutes approved: April 27, 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana E. Outlaw", written over a horizontal line.

Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda E. Blanco", written over a horizontal line.

Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk