

**CITY OF NEW BERN
BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEETING
SEPTEMBER 28, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
CITY HALL COURTROOM
300 POLLOCK STREET**

- 1. Meeting opened by Mayor Dana E. Outlaw. Prayer by Capt. Kenneth Monroe, Chaplain for the New Bern Fire Department. 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: Foster Hughes, City Manager; Michael Scott Davis, City Attorney; and Brenda Blanco, City Clerk.

Consent Agenda

- 3. Consider Adopting a Resolution Calling for a Public Hearing to Rezone 356 Rocky Run Road from R-20 Rural Residential to A-5F Agricultural Forestry District.**

Michael Raines requested to rezone two parcels that total approximately 77.72 acres. The parcels are in the ETJ area located at 356 Rocky Run Road and are further identified as Tax Parcel IDs 8-210-031 and 8-210-029. The current zoning is R-20 rural residential, and the zoning sought is A-5F agricultural forestry district. It was requested a public hearing be scheduled for October 12, 2021.

- 4. Approve Minutes.**

Draft minutes from the September 14, 2021 meeting were provided for review and approval.

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to approve Items 3-4 of the Consent Agenda, seconded by Alderman Aster. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

- 5. Presentation on Juneteenth of New Bern.**

On behalf of the Juneteenth committee, Talina Massey shared a PowerPoint presentation to recap the 2021 celebration. She also reviewed future plans and goals of the committee.

(Alderwoman Harris momentarily stepped out of the room at 6:04 p.m., returning to the room at 6:08 p.m.)

Ms. Massey asked the City to consider naming Juneteenth as a paid holiday for city employees.

6. Presentation on African American Heritage Signs.

Bernard George, Chairman of the African American Signs of History Committee, shared information about signs that were installed to reflect upon significant African American events, people, and places in the greater Craven Terrace/Dryborough neighborhood. The signs were secured through grant funds, and a dedication ceremony was held on June 19, 2021. Now that they have been installed, the committee requested that the City accept ownership and maintenance of the 10 signs.

As a member of the Tourism Development Authority (“TDA”), Alderman Bengel reflected upon the African American Heritage Trail handout and the interest that has been expressed by those who have seen information on the TDA’s website.

Mr. Hughes noted several of the signs are located on private property. Staff will work with the Committee regarding easements or moving the signs to the public right-of-way. Once that is worked out, staff will bring this matter back before the Board for consideration of ownership and maintenance. Alderman Bengel asked for clarification that the preference would be for the Committee to have the signs moved to the right-of-way, after which the City would consider acceptance. Mr. Hughes confirmed that was the preferred action.

7. Conduct a Public Hearing and Consider Adopting an Ordinance to Annex Tax Parcel IDs 7-035-002 and 7-035-030.

The Turf Club, LLC requested tax parcels 7-035-002 and 7-035-030 located at 4103 Old Cherry Point Road and 4016 US Hwy. 70E be annexed into the City of New Bern.

Mayor Outlaw opened the public hearing, but no one came forward to speak. Alderman Best made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

Alderman Aster made a motion to deny the petition to annex Tax Parcel IDs 7-035-002 and 7-035-030, seconded by Alderman Odham. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

8. Conduct a Public Hearing on the Proposed Redistricting Plan for the City of New Bern.

At the Board’s September 14, 2021 meeting, a public hearing was noticed for the purpose of receiving comments on the proposed redistricting plan. Maps of the

proposed changes were made available to the public on the City's website, at various city offices, and at the library.

Mayor Outlaw opened a public hearing to receive input on the redistricting. The following comments were offered:

Hazel Royal, a resident of Ward 2, asked that the focus not only be on balancing the population growth, but also economic growth. She encouraged the Board to consider the tax values of some of the properties so there is economic balance. Ward 2 already has its share of low tax-generating properties. The proposed changes would not only perpetuate a low-income ward, but would also stunt the growth of Ward 2. Lastly, she asked for a breakdown of wards by tax values cross referenced with demographic data.

Mayor Outlaw asked Mr. Davis for his legal thoughts. Mr. Davis stated he would check the law, but he did not believe economics was one of the criteria listed under the Equal Rights Act. Alderman Bengel clarified that ward boundaries are due in part to voting and not funding; one ward does not get more funding than another based on property tax values. Mr. Davis confirmed wards are drawn for voting rights, and lower-income wards are not penalized by their tax base. Alderman Odham explained the purpose of redistricting is to balance the population, which determines who will elect who in an election. However, the population does not look at the number of registered voters, but considers the total population. Children are counted in the population, which can skew the numbers.

Alice Wilson, GIS Coordinator, also confirmed the purpose of redistricting is to balance the population. Economic factors and voting percentages are not considered in drawing boundary lines. Only population is considered.

Alderwoman Harris commented about the Census data and the role it plays in opportunity zones. However, from a local level, the data is used to ensure that local governments have equal representation. Alderman Odham also noted that commercial properties could skew the economic numbers and provide a challenge if economic data were considered.

Alderman Kinsey made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. The motion carried unanimously 7-0.

Mr. Davis said the ward boundaries could be placed on the next agenda for consideration, or the issue could be postponed until a little later. Alderman Bengel asked if the comments submitted online could be circulated to the Board. After inquiry from Alderman Best, Mr. Davis explained the timespan for approving the new boundaries and recommended the Board strive to meet the November 17th deadline. There was discussion about aiming for the last meeting in October to consider approval of the new boundaries.

9. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving an Agreement with Craven Community College for 213 First Street.

The proposed lease with Craven Community College is for property located at 213 First Street, which is on the campus of the VOLT Center. The premises will be utilized as a commercial kitchen workforce development facility focused on restaurant operations, hospitality management, and other training activities. The term of the lease is 10 years at a rate of \$1.00 per year. The College approved the lease at its September 21, 2021 meeting and will be responsible for all costs associated with upfitting the space as a commercial kitchen.

Alderman Aster made a motion to adopt a resolution approving a lease agreement with Craven Community College for 213 First Street, seconded by Alderman Bengel. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried 5-2 with Aldermen Harris and Best voting against it.

10. Consider Adopting a Resolution Approving an Additional Streetlight on Frida Road.

Onaje Rickerby of 207 Frida Road requested additional lighting on Frida Road in the Lake Tyler Subdivision. Staff evaluated the request and determined the area meets the City's light standard, but recommended the addition of one streetlight near the end of the road due to darkness. The installation of the light will cost \$1,555.67, and the monthly utility charge for service will be \$16.27.

Alderman Best made a motion to adopt a resolution approving an additional streetlight on Frida Road, seconded by Alderwoman Harris. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously 7-0.

11. Appointment(s).

Alderman Odham made a motion to appoint Elona Fowler to the New Bern Firemen's Museum Board, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously 7-0. Ms. Fowler will serve out the remainder of Carol Zink's term, which will expire on April 22, 2023.

12. Attorney's Report.

The City Attorney had nothing to report.

13. City Manager's Report.

The City Manager had nothing to report.

14. New Business.

Alderman Bengel

Gratitude was voiced to the Board, staff, and citizens who expressed condolences during the passing of her father last week.

Some of the City's policies need to be more user friendly, and Alderman Bengel expressed a desire to review departmental policies to see if changes are needed. She asked Mr. Hughes to begin working on that and acknowledged it may take quite some time to update and implement the changes. Mr. Hughes stated staff has already begun the review process. It will be a work in progress, and the Board will be kept aware of the progress.

Alderwoman Harris

George Chiles, Interim Public Works Director, forwarded the Board a map of the ditch work that had been completed. She asked if this could be made available to the public. Mr. Chiles said the maps are progress maps of the Category A work, and he did not see a problem with distributing the information. Alderman Aster asked if the maps could be updated to incorporate street names.

Alderman Aster

The City received a substantial amount of funds from FEMA to clean sediment from some ditches and repair pipes. An update was sought on this work. Mr. Chiles announced current work was being performed on the Jimmy's basin, which is the King's Row area. There are several other areas where staff is going through punch-list items. Mr. Chiles stated he would consult with Finance to see where things stand on the Category A work. It was his hope that the Category A work would be completed by the end of the year, with Category D work starting thereafter.

An update was sought on the Request for Proposal ("RFP") for Stanley White Recreation Center ("SWRC") and restrooms at Henderson Park. Mr. Hughes stated the RFP for SWRC was being reviewed and should be issued very soon. Staff is also working on the change in scope of work for the restrooms.

Mayor Outlaw

Mr. Hughes was asked about the potential use of the American Rescue Plan ("ARP") funds. Mr. Hughes announced several seminars are being held in October and will be attended by staff. He expected information to be available to the Board in November.

Mayor Outlaw reflected on Alderman Bengel's father, his personality, and contributions to his community and country.

Alderman Kinsey

Brief comments reflecting upon Alderman Bengel's father were shared.

An inquiry was made as to whether additional staff would be hired to maintain the work that has been performed on the ditches. Mr. Hughes replied not at this time, but that would be considered during the next budget season.

Alderman Best

An inquiry was made as to how many employees were out due to COVID-19. Sonya Hayes, Director of Human Resources, did not have a specific count, but estimated 10-12 employees were out with 6-7 of those testing positive. She noted the numbers have decreased drastically.

Previously, there was discussion about the need to replace the cemetery shelters. Mr. Hughes said funding was never put in the budget, but staff can obtain quotes and provide that information to the Board for consideration.

A status update was sought on the Pleasant Hill Community Center. Mr. Hughes said the contractor had been selected, and staff was waiting to hear from the contractor as to when erection of the metal building would begin. The contractor is currently waiting on materials.

Noting the City Manager and some of the elected officials met with NC Railroad ("NCRR"), Alderman Best asked if the railroad by the Duffyfield canal was discussed during the meeting. A variety of topics were discussed, including drainage, according to Mr. Hughes. The City has a good relationship with NCRR, and it is believed an open line of communication will help things move forward.

Alderman Odham

It was asked whether the basketball court would be separate and aside from other portions of the SWRC project. In discussing this topic with the City's consultants, Mr. Hughes said the thought is that some of the funds could be used for the basketball court.

15. Closed Session.

A closed session was not needed.

16. Adjourn.

Alderwoman Harris made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Odham. The motion carried unanimously 7-0, time being 7:17 p.m.

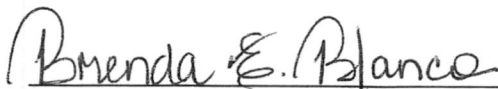
The attached documents are incorporated herewith and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

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: October 12, 2021



Dana E. Outlaw, Mayor



Brenda E. Blanco, City Clerk