

REGULAR MEETING CITY COUNCIL

March 21, 2022

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a regular session on Monday, March 21, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Ronnie Michael presided, and the following members were present, to-wit: Mayor Pro Tempore Martha Sue Hall and Councilmembers Bill Aldridge, Martha E. Hughes, Chris Whitley, Benton Dry, Dexter Townsend, and Shirley D. Lowder.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Resolution 22-08 – Honoring and Recognizing Mr. Gene Starnes and Starnes Jewelry

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Dry, unanimously carried, Council adopted Resolution 22-08.

Council acknowledged and thanked Mr. Gene Starnes and Starnes Jewelry for decades of service to the community of Albemarle. The Mayor thanked Mr. Starnes for all he and his family did with the jewelry store and with his own support and contributions to the City and particularly the downtown through his service on the Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation Board of Directors, Historic Resources Commissions, ad hoc committees, Stanly Arts Council, and the Uwharrie Players.

Council members were invited to address Mr. Starnes. Councilmember Dry thanked Mr. Starnes for all he has done, but noted that he is about to start a new beginning with his retirement from Starnes Jewelry. He is looking forward to Mr. Starnes’s future contributions. This recognition is gratitude from Council and the community that he deserves.

Councilmember Whitley noted that he has known Mr. Starnes for a long time and knows that he is not going anywhere in retirement but staying and continuing his commitment to Albemarle. He announced that Mr. Starnes has been offered and accepted a position on the Catalyst Grant Program Committee. He congratulated Mr. Starnes on his retirement.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall recounted that she has known that Mr. Starnes had a routine of walking between his house and the jewelry store for years, and that he used to be the ad man for the jewelry store on the radio. For the many years’ worth of activities in which he has participated to support the City, she noted that we are all grateful. She also stated that she looks forward to many more years of his service to the City. She concluded by telling him to enjoy his retirement.

Councilmember Lowder told Mr. Starnes that she has treasured their friendship over the years.

Councilmember Hughes stated that it has been a pleasure working with Mr. Starnes over the years, particularly through their association through the Downtown Christmas and Christmas Parade events. She also mentioned that he and Starnes Jewelry have helped her personally. She wished him much happiness.

Councilmember Townsend stated that he wakes up sometimes still hearing Mr. Starnes's voice from his radio ads, and thanked him for his faithful and dedicated service to Albemarle, particularly downtown Albemarle. The City is much better thanks to him.

The Mayor presented Mr. Starnes with a plaque of the resolution and a key to the City to honor him and the store, and read aloud the resolution.

Mr. Starnes made a few remarks. He thanked everyone and said it was quite an honor. He noted that his store employees and local customers also should receive credit and he owes them his gratitude. Serving Albemarle has been his pleasure from the very beginning.

Mr. Starnes received a standing ovation from all assembled and then left the meeting.

[Resolution 22-08 – Honoring and Recognizing Mr. Gene Starnes and Starnes Jewelry]

The Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation (ADDC) Chair of the Board of Directors Ms. Edna Lipe-Harkey came in front of Council for the next two presentations.

Presentation of the Main Street Champion Award to Mayor Michael

Ms. Lipe-Harkey noted that Mayor Michael received the Main Street Champion Award for Albemarle at the recent NC Main Street Conference after a unanimous decision by the ADDC Board to nominate him. The award is provided in recognition of efforts to build, enhance, and sustain the downtown. ADDC felt that Mayor Michael was a good choice for the award due to his quiet efforts behind the scenes to bring the City and others together to form public-private partnerships to recruit and provide support for the City of Albemarle.

A video highlighting the Mayor and his contributions was played.

The Mayor stated that he was humbled to receive the award, but that he could not have done anything without the help of Council, the ADDC, City volunteers, and City employees.

The Mayor received a round of applause.

Presentation of a North Carolina Main Street Award to the City of Albemarle

Ms. Lipe-Harkey noted that the City of Albemarle received the award for best Public-Private Partnership for its work on the Pfeiffer Health Sciences Center project in Downtown Albemarle. The City worked diligently to bring the partnership together benefiting Albemarle and Pfeiffer University. The project complemented the vision of the City to develop an environment where investment and opportunity could be made and flourish in the Downtown, coined the "Pfeiffer effect."

A video highlighting the partners' contributions and summarizing the project was played.

She recognized the partners sharing the award:

- Pfeiffer University;
- Stokes Construction;
- Little Diversified Architectural Consulting;
- Stanly County; and
- The City of Albemarle.

The Mayor noted that Council and City employees supported the project 100%, and recognized City departments like Administration, Planning and Development Services, Public Works, Public Utilities, and others for their part in making the project successful. He hopes the downtown campus will serve as an anchor for growth of the City and more people living and visiting here. He thanked the NC Main Street program for recognizing the project and partnerships with this award.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall credited the term "Pfeiffer effect" to former City Councilmember Chris Bramlett and wished he was here tonight.

City Manager Michael J. Ferris thanked all City departments and employees for contributing their efforts towards this project in order to make it successful. The downtown campus is an example of how creativity and innovation come together to build something beneficial to the City. This satellite campus was part of the vision of what downtown Albemarle can grow to become. This project also showcases to other municipalities that this kind of collaboration can be duplicated, and provides lasting effects for future generations.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Townsend, seconded by Councilmember Dry, unanimously carried, the minutes of the March 7, 2022 regular and closed meetings were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Ordinance 22-19 – Consider Rezoning Map Amendment on Belmont Circle from LID Light Industrial to R-O Residential Office

Linker Built Homes, LLC is requesting a zoning map amendment from LID to R-O in order to construct a new single family home on 3.2 acres on Belmont Circle. The applicant intends to rezone this lot to Residential Office in order to be congruent with adjacent zoning districts and uses. The parcel is vacant currently.

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson presented the rezoning request and staff analysis to Council. At the March 3rd Planning and Zoning Board Meeting, the Board unanimously made a favorable recommendation to City Council that they approve ZMA 22-02 with the Consistency Statement.

The Mayor asked if developing the utilities infrastructure was the property owner's responsibility. Yes it is.

The Mayor called for the public hearing to be opened and asked if anyone would like to speak on the topic. No one came forward to speak.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, unanimously carried, the public hearing was closed.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, Council approved Ordinance 22-19 containing Zoning Map Amendment 22-02 with the following consistency statement:

The Albemarle City Council finds the action to amend Tax Record 24350 from LID/Light Industrial District to R-O/Residential Office District to be consistent with the adopted 2028 Land Use Plan. Council finds the urban residential district zoning on this parcel to be reasonable and in the public interest.

[Ordinance 22-19 – Consider Rezoning Map Amendment on Belmont Circle from LID Light Industrial to R-O Residential Office]

Ordinance 22-20 – Consider Zoning Map Amendment on Russell Road from R-10 General Residential to GHBD General Highway Business District

Morton Management Company is requesting a map amendment from R-10 to GHBD. The reason for the request is the utility account on the property was inactive for more than 180 days which renders the use on this property as non-conforming. The Planning Department was approached about having the utilities turned back on for a transportation service company which is not a permitted use in the R-10 zoning district. Staff recommended the applicant apply for a map amendment for GHBD in order to accommodate the use and be in compliance with our adopted ordinance.

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson presented the rezoning request and staff analysis to Council. The Planning and Zoning Board unanimously recommended for approval with consistency statement at its March 3rd meeting.

The Mayor called for the public hearing to be opened and asked if anyone would like to speak on the topic. Mr. John Lipcsak, residing at 1219 Heritage Drive in Albemarle and representing the company, came in front of Council to explain their request for rezoning. The company needs the lot to park their equipment. Due to the 180-day utility disconnect rule, the company in its process to get utility service restored dialogued with the Planning Department to discover the nonconforming use and the solution of applying for a rezoning of the lot.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Townsend, seconded by Councilmember Hall, unanimously carried, the public hearing was closed.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, unanimously carried, Council approved Ordinance 22-20 containing Zoning Map Amendment 22-03 with the following consistency statement:

The Albemarle City Council finds the action to amend Tax Record 24493 from R-10/General Residential District to GHBD/General Highway Business District to be consistent with the adopted 2028 Land Use Plan. Council finds the urban residential district zoning on this parcel to be reasonable and in the public interest.

[Ordinance 22-20 – Consider Zoning Map Amendment on Russell Road from R-10 General Residential to GHBD General Highway Business District]

ANNOUNCED DELEGATIONS

Nathan Russell – To Request a Partial Abandonment of Riley Street

Nathan Russell came in front of Council to request that a public hearing be held regarding a partial abandonment of Riley Street from Russell Road to their property to the south. He noted some of the concerns stemming from this request, including the condition of the road, some instances of illegal dumping in this area, and being able to control access in the area of their business.

Per information provided in the agenda packet, staff has several concerns with this request.

- While there aren't any houses that front Riley Street in this area, there are other properties owned by others that only have frontage on this right of way. If this section were abandoned, this would significantly affect the possibility of future development on their property. They would need to have a form of public right of way to be able to develop anything.
- Private streets are not allowed in the City unless in a gated community.
- The Riley Street right of way seems to be shared with the Norfolk Southern right of way.
- There are currently public utilities within this section of right of way and access to such would have to remain unobstructed.
- With this being a partial abandonment, the area to be abandoned would have to be surveyed to determine the exact area the City would potentially abandon upon approval.

Staff recommended that Riley Street remain as a public street.

The Mayor voiced a concern about the partial railroad right of way which could complicate the ability of the City to be able to consider the request. Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson acknowledged that this issue needs to be researched, as well as further assessment completed particularly related to access of emergency services vehicles, and notifying the affected property owners of the request for abandonment of part of the street.

Mr. Robinson and Mr. Russell answered questions from Council.

Per Council discussion and feedback from Mr. Robinson, Council concluded that more research needs to be completed by City staff to ease Council's concerns and questions.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Aldridge, unanimously carried, Council approved City staff to research further the feasibility of a railroad right of way abandonment, complete their assessment per the parameters discussed, and provide notification to nearby property owners of the partial abandonment request and bring an update back to Council at a future meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Departmental Monthly Reports

The Mayor and Council received monthly departmental reports for February 2022 prior to the meeting. The Mayor asked if any Council members had any questions or comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall had a series of comments. She gave "attaboys" to departments which referenced dates for activities or trainings. Per the Parks and Recreation report, she made an announcement about parking at the Albemarle Neighborhood Theater – parking on 3rd Street is public, not reserved parking. She thanked the Public Utilities Electric Division for working on the power outage over the weekend, and also the Water Division for their emergency work in her neighborhood over the weekend for a water main break.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Mayor asked if Council wanted to move any items on the consent agenda.

Resolution 22-09 – To Accept State Roads for City Maintenance

At the July 12, 2021 meeting, Council voted to commit to accept a portion of Kingsley Drive and all of Mabry Drive from the NCDOT. The NCDOT has completed their improvements and the City can now accept these roadways.

Background:

Mabry Drive - The maintained portion of Mabry is a 470-feet long by 22-feet wide and serves the Quality Enclosures facility. The NCDOT is performing maintenance on this street as it currently has many potholes. It connects to Kingsley Drive and is a dead end at the other end. The NCDOT would like to resurface the entire roadway and then turn it over to the City as part of our road system moving forward. The NCDOT would not complete the resurfacing until early in 2022, but they would like a commitment from the City that we would accept the road once resurfaced. We do not really have a need for the street, but if it is improved by NCDOT we will be able to continue to provide service to a business our economic development program recruited and the road would connect to an existing City Road (Kingsley if this section is also accepted).

Kingsley Drive - This is a City maintained street from West Main Street until approximately 500-feet from its intersection with Poplin's Grove Church Road. The NCDOT section was outside the City at one time and was therefore under their maintenance. Over the years, the City has annexed in this area. The NCDOT is proposing that we accept the remainder of Kingsley Drive as part of our system. It was resurfaced in this area approximately 5 years ago and is in good condition.

Staff Recommendation:

The City Manager does not see an issue with the acceptance of Mabry, once resurfaced, and the section of Kingsley Drive. The City and District office have a very good working relationship and acceptance by the City makes sense as Mabry will connect to a City street if all of Kingsley will become a City street. It will also make maintenance responsibilities clearer for the future. We would be committing to acceptance of two roads in very good condition that we could add to our system for additional Powell Bill funding. The NCDOT advises that if we provide a commitment to accept, a formal acceptance process will be initiated once they complete improvements to Mabry Drive in early 2022.

[Resolution 22-09 – To Accept State Roads for City Maintenance]

Consider Road Closure for Rotary Club Fundraiser

The Rotary Club will be holding a BBQ fundraiser on April 8th from 9 am - 6 pm. Roads requested to be closed include: CB Crook Drive from 1st Street to 2nd Street.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Aldridge, seconded by Councilmember Townsend, unanimously carried, Council approved the following:

- Resolution 22-09 to accept a portion of Kingsley Drive and all of Mabry Drive from the NCDOT for City maintenance; and
- Road closure as requested for the Rotary Club BBQ fundraiser on April 8th.

NEW BUSINESS

Proclamation to Designate April as Autism Awareness Month

The City has been requested to proclaim April as Autism Awareness Month. The Mayor asked Dawn Allen from GHA Autism Supports to come forward to make remarks. Ms. Allen thanked Mayor and Council for recognizing April as Autism Awareness Month. Per a CDC report released in 2021, 1 in 44 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder annually. She hoped that by raising awareness more acceptance would occur for those with autism.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall read the proclamation aloud. The Mayor presented Ms. Allen with a signed copy of the proclamation.

Dr. Kim Scott, Director Of Public Housing – To Request the Closing of Inger Street Entrance to the Department of Public Housing

Dr. Scott came in front of Council to make the request. Since assuming the duties as Director of Public Housing, he has met with the Amhurst Gardens Resident Council on two occasions and a concern was raised about traffic entering the community from Leonard Avenue, as well as illegal activities occurring in the community, specifically the playground area. As in the past, non-residents speeding and conducting illegal activities remains the concern. The Residents Council discussions suggested that the current speed humps slow the traffic; however, the concern is with the speed of these vehicles as they enter the housing community from Leonard Avenue.

Dr. Scott also met with Police Chief Bollhorst, as well as Fire Chief Brewton. They both stated that blocking the street will not impede emergency vehicle access to and from the community, but would aid in apprehending persons of interest/suspects. Further discussions with the Police Department after the shooting this past Saturday concluded that had Inger Street been blocked, the barricade, coupled with the use of cameras strategically placed in the community, would have made it easier to apprehend the perpetrators.

Dr. Scott asked Council to consider placing a moveable barricade to close the entrance to Inger Street. Mayor Pro Tem Hall asked Dr. Scott to explain the request for that type of barrier. Dr. Scott replied that he worked at the Public Housing Department in the early 1990s when the Director came in front of Council to request a permanent barrier be installed. Now after doing some comparative research, he found that a moveable barrier might be a better solution.

Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson noted to Council that his department hadn't had a chance to review the request yet and has concerns about traffic flow and how this would impact compliance with the City's Code of Ordinances. If this closure were to happen, traffic flow would mostly come out on Amhurst, and he reminded Council of a recently Council-approved subdivision going in near the public housing complex, which could congest traffic more in the area.

The Mayor commented that he was in favor of installing the barrier.

Councilmember Townsend noted that he was opposed to the closure request for the following reasons: he recalled a fire incident years ago when the permanent barrier was up and City emergency apparatus had to detour to get to the scene and so is concerned about emergency vehicle access; there is a pedestrian plan in that area which needs to be considered; this may impact improvements being made to encourage more retail business in the area; and echoed Mr. Robinson's concern about how the South Bell subdivision might impact the area.

The Mayor asked Dr. Scott if a survey of Public Housing residents was done. Dr. Scott replied that both a paper and in person survey was administered to residents. Of the paper surveys, 38 were completed and turned in to Public Housing staff, and of those, 30 were in favor of the street closure.

Councilmember Townsend and Dr. Scott had a discussion about the use of cameras and the speed hump placed in the complex for crime deterrence.

City Manager Michael J. Ferris moved the discussion forward by commenting to Council that City staff have 2 opposing views on this request and may not reach consensus, and so prompted for what the specific focus of the request should be. A response indicated that perhaps a Resident Council hearing should occur to seek more input.

Councilmember Aldridge asked if Dr. Scott had looked at other Public Housing communities to see how they handled this issue. Dr. Scott replied that he reviewed or discussed the issue with Greensboro and some other municipalities, and found that those municipalities tended to have 1 way in, 1 way out road access.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Lowder, unanimously carried, Council approved City staff researching the request further to address the concerns raised tonight and bring further recommendations back to Council at a future meeting.

Employee Retention and Compensation Update and Action

HR Director Dana Chaney, Public Utilities Director Dan Worl and Electric Superintendent Dennis Curlee came in front of Council to debrief them on a proposed employee retention and compensation plan and take questions. The group presented a PowerPoint presentation. Extreme market factors continue to create unique challenges for the City. The Electric Division is of particular concern.

Mr. Curlee thanked Council for hearing the request tonight. Not only is he speaking as the Electric Superintendent, but also as a customer. The issue he is facing is that he is training personnel just to lose them to higher paying utilities or municipalities. He then said that in the next few years 6 of his crew will be eligible for retirement. Mayor Pro Tem Hall asked how many current openings there were in the division. There are 2. Retaining staff in this division is critical.

Ms. Chaney presented the group's proposal via the presentation. She reviewed the following with Council:

- The 5-year turnover trend in the City of Albemarle by department, noting that the 12 month turnover rate for the Electric Division was 28%, with the loss of 1 crew leader, 2 level 2 linesmen, and 2 level 1 linesmen. To compound the issue, it takes 5 years to reach level 3 linesman. The division currently has 5 staff who have received active offers for employment elsewhere.
- How the City of Albemarle's Electric Division services compared to other utility companies in the area in 2020, with the City's division providing better service than most if not all of the others.
- Positive comments from social media about electric service.
- The impacts of electric crew employee loss which would include increased costs to replace employees, increased risks, and increased power downtime.
- Summary of electric team exit interviews if top reasons why they left (compensation and a limited career path).

- Current market comparisons regionally for an apprentice line worker, line helper/ground worker, senior/journey level line worker and a crew leader; and
- The recommendations of staff for the Electric Division, including:
 - Rate increases as follows: Level 1=\$21.43/hr.; Level 2=\$24.50/hr.; Level 3=\$29.00/hr.; and crew leader=\$32.80/hr.
 - Include the Electric Division in the first year rotating market study;
 - Plan for a mid-year increase in January 2023; and
 - Electric Division's inclusion in City-wide personnel retention enhancements including implementing career ladders; providing ongoing training and feedback; and providing additional benefits options.

The group took questions from Council. Council asked about where the proposed funds were coming from, what the Electric Division really needs if this is considered a stopgap measure, and how the proposed rates were sourced, among others. Staff addressed these questions with Council.

Ms. Chaney reviewed the proposed larger market rate implementation study timeline, noting that a third of the City's workforce in positions with high turnover rates like Public Utilities, Police, and Fire would be the focus of compensation adjustments in the coming fiscal year, followed by other front line staff in the next fiscal year, with administration staff in the 3rd year of the 3-year plan. Council and she discussed a few Council member's concerns about selecting this particular group over others before the end of this fiscal year rather than waiting until the new fiscal year begins. Ms. Chaney expressed again the dire need to maintain the staffing in the Electric Division.

The Mayor called for a motion. Councilmember Dry made the motion to approve the request to immediately raise the rates for Electric Division staff and promote other retention solutions as recommended by staff, seconded by Councilmember Townsend.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall began a before the vote discussion. She commented that this request is for a small portion of the 280 person staff of the City, and that it should be acknowledged that the City and Council need to be real about what can be done with the staffing retention issue. Councilmember Dry stated that putting the decision off won't help the situation. Councilmember Hughes stated that she supports this specific request for compensation adjustment for Electric Division staff but said that other staff need to be remembered too. Councilmember Lowder thanked staff for coming in front of Council to explain the need and request action. She thinks the need is worthy and that Council does need to support this.

The Mayor called for the vote. Upon the motion made by Councilmember Dry and seconded by Councilmember Townsend, all Council members voted to approve staff's request as specified above.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall called for a second motion for the City to provide another healthcare coverage option and a larger portfolio of health and wellness programs to place in front of Council for consideration before this fiscal year ends. Councilmember Hughes seconded the motion, and all Council members voted in the favor of the motion.

Consider ARPA Workgroup Recommendations for Funding Tranche #2

City Manager Michael J. Ferris presented the Workgroup's recommendations for ARPA 2nd tranche funding. The ARPA Workgroup has developed a second tranche strategy. The Workgroup is recommending utilizing approximately half of the second tranche to pursue needed radio replacements, with the vast majority of radios being for Police and Fire. A discussion of the need to replace radios was held at a recent City Council meeting earlier this year. This cost is estimated at \$1.3 million. The Workgroup has also decided to defer making a decision regarding the remaining amount beyond the cost of the radio replacements to a later date. The following are reasons for the recommendations being made at this time:

- The annual operating budget will not need to make room for an estimated \$276,000 each year for a 5-year period if the radios are purchased outright with ARPA funds.
- Acquisition of the radios with ARPA funds will avoid approximately \$84,000 in interest payments (2.5%, 5-year term).
- The acquisition of radios touches on two Goal areas of the Strategic Plan - Safety and Security as well as Infrastructure.
- This action will commit 3/4 of all ARPA funds for local needs. The remaining 1/4 undesignated can be held to address future needs.
- The final rules allow the remaining funds to be utilized as grant matches.

The ARPA Workgroup is seeking approval for the radio purchase.

On a note related to the ARPA, the Workgroup also voted to recommend the entire ARPA allotment be designated as lost revenue. Based on the input from various sources, this allows the greatest flexibility with the most straightforward reporting requirements. We plan to have an Ordinance for consideration at an upcoming meeting to declare the use of funds as lost revenue.

Mr. Ferris took questions from Council. When will funds need to be dedicated and spent? Funds need to be dedicated by 2024 and spent by 2026.

Council discussed the request further, with some members wanting to delay further Council consideration on Tranche 2 spending noting that these funds are once in a lifetime and should be considered further, while others thought that funding for Tranche 2 should be considered now.

City Manager Michael J. Ferris noted to Council that the timing of ARPA Workgroup and strategic planning sessions was mapped out because funding decisions are intertwined with capital projects and their related expenditures. Should Council decide not to make a decision on Tranche 2 funding of the radios, then the City would have to outlay that expenditure in the next fiscal year, which would draw away from other established and routine capital funding plans Council highlighted in the strategic planning process.

A question was asked about how long the City's discount with Motorola would last. A Motorola representative in the audience replied by saying the City's discount was good until April 1st.

Further discussion by Council on both sides revealed that there is a circular from NCLM showing creative ways other municipalities are dedicating ARPA funds and Council should read and consider this viewpoint, while others highlighted the tough decision Council would have to make soon on the upcoming fiscal year budget if they decided to pass on the use of a large portion of ARPA Tranche 2 funds on the radio upgrade needed.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hughes, seconded by Councilmember Hall, and carried with a vote of 5 Council members for the motion and 2 against, Council approved delaying consideration of ARPA Tranche 2 funding as recommended by staff and the ARPA Workgroup with this current request. Councilmembers Dry and Whitley voted against the motion.

Consider Appointments to Boards and Commissions

There have been a few vacancies which have opened up on the Planning and Zoning Board prompting Council's consideration of new candidates to fill the following seats:

Planning/Zoning Board:

- Seat 2 - Keith Wolf - Moved out of the City.
- 2nd alternate - Emily James - Board position in conflict with work schedule.

Staff recommendations are:

- Move Joey Gathings to the #2 seat as a regular member to replace Mr. Wolf.
- Move Marcus Owens up to the 1st Alt spot which Joey Gathings held.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, Council approved City staff's recommendations regarding the current members' shift to the above mentioned seats.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, unanimously carried, Council approved Julie Curtis for alternate seat #2, and Mica Shapiro for alternate seat #3 on the Planning and Zoning Board.

The Mayor commented that Ms. Curtis already sits on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and so should not be shouldered with positions on too many City boards and commissions.

Information – Fire Department Awarded a Cannon Foundation Grant

Fire Chief Pierre Brewton came in front of Council to announce the grant award and take questions from Council. The City of Albemarle Fire Department has been awarded \$27,997 by The Cannon Foundation, Inc. to purchase a Swift Water Rescue Boat with motor and trailer. No match is required by the City. Chief Brewton noted that this award is specifically due to the efforts of former City Fire Marshal Michael Roark and the 3 battalion chiefs to put the grant together and submit it.

In November 2020, members of the Fire Department became certified in swift water rescue, and so the department decided that appropriate equipment should be sought to enable them to have this service available if needed.

Council congratulated the Chief and the Fire Department for this accomplishment.

COMMENTS

City Manager Michael J. Ferris:

- He congratulated Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Kiser for her spotlight recognition by Centralina Regional Council (CRC) on their main webpage for her leadership on the strategic planning process.

Councilmember Townsend:

- He congratulated both Ms. Kiser and the Mayor for their recognition and award respectively.
- Per Council's approval of the rate increases for the Electric Division, he asked when that new rate would be effective. HR Director Dana Chaney replied it would be effective this current pay period which ends on March 20th.
- He saw in a NCLM newsletter that there is a grant opportunity open for downtown revitalization and wondered if staff could apply for it for the Alleyway Project.

Councilmember Hughes:

- She congratulated Ms. Kiser and the Mayor.
- She reminded everyone that the next county electronics recycling event would be on April 23rd.
- She inquired about the status of the Assistant City Manager search. City Manager Michael J. Ferris replied that the search was moving forward.

Councilmember Aldridge:

- He congratulated Ms. Kiser and the Mayor.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall:

- She congratulated Ms. Kiser and the Mayor.
- She noted to staff that CRC still has regional award applications available to apply for public/private partnerships like the Pfeiffer Downtown Sciences Campus project.
- She reminded the public that the recycling event Councilmember Hughes mentioned would be at the Stanly County Agricultural Center and was a morning to early afternoon event that day.
- She noted there were 2 water main breaks this past weekend, one over by Highway 52 and one yesterday in her neighborhood. She again thanked crews for being responsive, but noted that if the outage is widespread enough, City staff should consider noting this on social media as well as a point of contact to alert affected customers.
- Re: past Council/Planning and Zoning Board dinners – what is the status of resuming them? Planning and Development Services Director Kevin Robinson replied that it went inactive due to COVID as well as department staffing issues but could be considered again should Council want them to continue.

Councilmember Whitley:

- Re: the resident's request for audible traffic signals downtown at the last meeting, he asked the NCDOT representative on the Rocky River RPO about whether there was a process to request

this. There is a process which goes through a particular engineer at NCDOT and would be happy to share this with Administration staff to reach out to the requestor with this information.

- Re: the Mini Medley Relay last weekend – he volunteered for the event and congratulated parks and Recreation staff and Mr. Kiser for a good job with it.
- As the CATALYST Program’s Committee chair, he announced that the CATALYST grant program application period is now open effective last week. The deadline for receipt of applications is May 16th for this grant round.
- The NCDOT Spring Litter Sweep will be April 16th- 30th. Keep Stanly Beautiful also will be holding trash pick up events before the month ends.

Councilmember Dry:

- He congratulated Ms. Kiser and the Mayor.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall noted that per last weekend’s Mini Medley Relay event, she said she received feedback from residents along the event route saying that although they loved seeing the kids run by, they didn’t like folks on their lawns and wondered if this could be addressed by staff the next time the event is run.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Whitley, unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned to Monday, April 4, 2022 at 6:30 pm in Council Chambers at City Hall.