

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, January 15, 2019, at the Union Train Station. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present:

Council Member Charles H. Cuthbert, Jr.  
Council Member Annette Smith-Lee  
Council Member W. Howard Myers  
Vice Mayor John A. Hart, Sr.  
Mayor Samuel Parham

Absent: Council Member Treska Wilson-Smith  
Council Member Darrin Hill

Present from City Administration:

City Manager Aretha R. Ferrell-Benavides  
Assistant City Attorney Rashaad Bey  
Clerk of Council Nykeshia D. Jackson, CMC

**2. PRAYER:**

\*No item for this portion of the meeting.

**3. CLOSED SESSION:**

Assistant City Attorney Rashaad Bey stated that City Council will now move to go into closed session for one purpose pursuant to Section 2.2-3711.A (1) of the Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, council will be in closed session for the discussion or consideration of interviews of prospective candidates for employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, discipline or resignation of specific public officers, appointees or employees of any public body; under Subsection 3 for the discussion of disposition of publicly held real property and under Subsection 7 for consultation of legal counsel pertaining to specific legal matters requiring the provision legal advice by such counsel.

Vice Mayor Hart moved that the City Council go into closed session for the purposes noted by the City Attorney. The motion was seconded by Council Member Myers. There was no discussion on the motion, which was approved on roll call vote.

On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Myers, Hart and Parham; Absent: Wilson-Smith and Hill

City Council entered closed session at 6:33 p.m.

**CERTIFICATION:**

Mr. Bey stated that City Council now moves to come out of closed session and certify that only public business matters lawfully exempted from an open meeting requirement pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and only such business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting.

Council Member Myers made a motion to return City Council into open session and certify the purposes of the closed session. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Hart. There was discussion on the motion.

The motion was approved on roll call vote.

On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Myers, Hart and Parham; Absent: Wilson-Smith and Hill

**19-R-06 A RESOLUTION CERTIFYING, AS REQUIRED BY THE CODE OF VIRGINIA, SECTION 2.2-3712, THAT TO THE BEST OF EACH MEMBER'S KNOWLEDGE, ONLY PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS LAWFULLY EXEMPTED FROM OPEN MEETING REQUIREMENTS OF VIRGINIA LAW WERE DISCUSSED IN THE CLOSED SESSION, AND ONLY SUCH PUBLIC BUSINESS MATTERS AS WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE MOTION CONVENING THE CLOSED SESSION WERE HEARD, DISCUSSED, OR CONSIDERED.**

**4. MOMENT OF SILENCE:**

a. Clerk of Council, Nykesha D. Jackson, led council and the audience in a moment of silence.

**5. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

a. Clerk of Council, Nykesha D. Jackson, led council and the audience in the pledge of allegiance.

**6. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:**

All City Council Members were present.

Mayor Parham stated, "At this time I would like to ask for Bishop Kenneth Hicks, Pastor of Christian Tabernacle, to do our opening prayer."

Pastor Hicks led the City in prayer.

Mayor Parham stated, "For tonight's Positive Petersburg Story I'd like to point the spotlight on Dogwood Trace Golf Course for our Positive Petersburg story. Dogwood Trace has cracked the Top of the list on Golf Advisors Top 25 Golf Courses in Virginia for 2018. Coming in at #10, Dogwood Trace currently boasts a 4.4 star rating out of 5 stars. This yearly Golf Advisor best-of list is compiled by analyzing the ratings and reviews submitted by members of the Golf Advisor community throughout the year. Dogwood Trace Golf Course is a beautiful course right here in Petersburg! Most recently, The Grille at Dogwood Trace has opened - offering a delicious menu and fresh dining experience! Congratulations to our very own Dogwood Trace Golf Course on making it to the Top Ten of Virginia's best courses!"

**7. PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS:  
(Each presentation will be limited to 10 minutes.)**

There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

**8. COMMUNICATIONS/SPECIAL REPORTS:**

a. Update and discussion on Perry Street Project

Council Member Myers made a motion that City Council Zoning Ordinance 10-ORD-101, adopted on December 14, 2010 (the "Ordinance"), be clarified as follows:

- 1) The 5-year "sunset" provisions found in Section 2, subsection 12 of the Ordinance expired in 2016 as a result of a conveyance by B. Vee, Inc. to 110 South Perry, LLC by Deed date April

27, 2011, recorded May 2, 2011, as Instrument No. 11000950.

- 2) Both market rate and affordable rental apartments constructed using federal low-income housing tax credits are permitted uses.
- 3) Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers may be used only if (a) the property owner's eligibility criteria for all applicants are also met, and (b) such voucher holders are not given any preference for occupancy of such apartments.

The motion was seconded by Council Member Smith-Lee. There was discussion on the motion among council, staff and Attorney Sandy Graham.

Vice Mayor Hart made a substitute motion to table this until they have received additional information on the ordinance and its contents. The motion was seconded by Council Member Cuthbert. The substitute motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Hart and Parham; Voting No: Myers; Absent: Wilson-Smith and Hill

- b. City Assessor Report – Brian Gordineer, AAS, City Assessor

There are no items for the City Assessor Report.

- c. City Manager Report – Aretha R. Ferrell-Benavides, City Manager

Mrs. Benavides stated, "Mayor and Council, you have a copy of my memo with an update. Part of my report that I would like to highlight for you is one speaking of Dogwood Trace. One thing that we are excited about is that the grill of Dogwood Trace is open for business again. It will be run by the City. We are in the initial phase of hiring staff. We welcome and invite all out to join us. The second part of my presentation is that one of my requests that I received from council is to talk a little bit about utility and billing process. So, the second part of my city manager's report I am going to turn it over to Mr. Rogers to go over our utility billing."

Mr. Rogers stated, "Mayor and Council, I believe that you have a presentation in front of you that I am going to introduce. But we are making this presentation tonight because we have had conversations with the Mayor and Council Member Cuthbert about this 90-Day rule. We have come to you in the past that suggested that we were cutting people off. Because of state law it was preventing us from doing so until the 91<sup>st</sup> day. Upon your questioning that I further look at this we sort of get to the genesis of why we believed that operating under that articular scenario. If you look at the state law question you can easily come to the 90 days. But what we have come to learn is that in our collaboration with Chesterfield County that they were operating under that 90-day rule because they were billing every two months. We used to bill every two months but then we went back to billing every month I think for cash flow reasons. That was no longer the effective implementation of the state law. So, I am going to have Mr. Baxter to come tell you know the rules that we are putting in place that immediately begin to reinstitute the cut-off policy for delinquent water bills. Mr. Baxter."

Jay Baxter gave a, overview of billing and collections with a PowerPoint presentation.

Key points:

- Have a revenue calendar that they operate weekly and monthly with.
- Training for more help with answering the phones and questions from citizens.
- Focusing on accounts that are over 90 days in which it is 1,695 accounts.
- Utility Bills are due the first of the month and there is a ten-day delinquent notification letter that is sent out on the 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Delinquent shut-offs start on the 11<sup>th</sup> day and there is a \$50 reconnection fee that is added to the bill.
- To restore services, they have to pay of the bill with reconnection service fee added on to amount dues. Service will then be reconnected in 24hrs.

- Delinquent letters are sent out monthly and analyses are done weekly.
- Delinquent letters at a minimum of 300 are sent out monthly and garnishments are done quarterly.

There was discussion among council and Mr. Baxter.

Mayor Parham asked Mrs. Benavides to provide council with a list of delinquent accounts, especially the City employees.

Mrs. Benavides stated, "One of the things that we are working with both Mrs. Innis, when I worked for the City of Chicago we had an issue of delinquencies. This is not something that is unique to just Petersburg. In fact, one of the things that they started to do in which I started doing is running our employee list against our delinquency list. And in doing that and starting off with my senior staff because I think they have to be responsible but in order to do that we have to make sure to hold our employees accountable. We will make sure that you have that information from the City staff."

d. City Attorney Report – Rashaad Bey, Assistant City Attorney

Mr. Bey stated, "Three items from the City Attorney's Department that has been worked on in the past 60 days. We have worked with code compliance on enforcement. We have determined that we will have training and seminars starting in January 2019 to effectively increase our compliance. And to ensure that the enforcement is efficient, effective and timely. Secondly, we have developed a micro developer's program with code compliance to assist micro developers who have five or more properties that are in different stages of development to reduce the gridlock in the court system when these developers sometimes fall short of compliance requirements. So, we are now going to work with them in assisting that they are in compliance and that all the code compliance departments are working in unity while they insure that the piece of property be properly treated. Thirdly, we are developing a legislative internship program to provide college students an opportunity to learn about local government and the legislative process in the City of Petersburg."

e. 380 E. Washington Street Update (Former Ramada Inn) – Reginald Tabor, Economic Development Manager

**BACKGROUND:** During the January 3, 2019 meeting, the City of Petersburg City Council requested an update on the progress of the hotel development project at 380 E Washington Street, the former Ramada Inn and Fort Lee Regency Hotel.

The purchase agreement between the City of Petersburg and Virginia Hotel Development Group, LLC to sell the property at 326, 380 and 400 E Washington Street, was executed May 17, 2016. In accordance with the agreement, the owner must obtain a Certificate of Occupancy for the property within 36 months, May 17, 2019, or the City can exercise the right to re-purchase the property for the amount paid by the purchaser.

The City also obtained financial commitments through the Virginia Brownfields Restoration and Economic Redevelopment Assistance Fund (VBAF) to provide funding totaling \$350,000 to abate lead and asbestos, as well as a loan commitment through the Virginia Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF), totaling \$600,000. A final report is due for the VBAF grant, and certain information must be reported on or before January 31, 2019 to retain the IRF loan. The information needed for the reports is to be provided by the Project Developer.

In August 2018, the Developer reported that they have certifications that the abatement has been completed, however; they have had issues with one of the abatement contractors and are in the process of reviewing the work they completed. After the review was completed, they anticipated they would be able to opine as to if the work was done correctly.

Staff awaits information from the developer for the reports associated with State financing programs as well as a status of the construction, and a construction schedule.

**RECOMMENDATION:** City Council accepts and considers the report.

Mr. Tabor stated, "In your packet you have an update as requested on the developer of 380 E. Washington Street, formerly the Ramada Inn Hotel. We have been working with a developer who purchased the property from the City. As we stated in the report we are waiting on some information from the developer to submit in compliance with two state funding programs for the project. As we get that information we will certainly relay this to City Council."

f. Public Works and Utilities Report – Tangelia Innis, Public Works and Utilities Department

Mr. Lyons introduced the staff that works in Public Utilities and Public Works.

Mrs. Innis gave a PowerPoint presentation on the public works and utilities report and social services building remediation update.

Key Points:

- Primary function of the engineering division includes stormwater management, environmental reviews, land development, traffic engineering, GIs, right-of-way permits, surveying, construction management services for the City of Petersburg.
- Completed the Hustings Court project that was \$1.2 million dollars.
- This year they will be working on completing a roof for Westview Early Childhood Development, completion of Southside Depot and work to the City Hall Annex Building.
- They also completed the North Park Drive drainage and the MS4 Compliance Information and the Permeable Paver at Lakemont Elementary School.
- This year they will complete the Lakemont Drainage Study by March 2019.
- They have completed pavement projects and ramps within the City.
- Right-of-Way Permit Program is in effect and process is listed and available to public.
- They have completed a ward sweep in the City as well.
- There are six employees that do the meter readings.
- They do meter readings on a monthly basis.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "Mrs. Innis your presentation was quite impressive. You certainly have formidable responsibilities and the progress that you and your team are making is inspirational to all of us. And we all thank you."

Mayor Parham stated, "Again thank you Mrs. Innis."

Mr. Lyons stated, "Mrs. Innis forgot to mention that we have one major issue right now in Pocahontas. There is a major sewer crack. We have reached out to a consultant company that is scheduled to start to help us with this. It is Southern Construction. We are hoping that this crack that is in the sewer line, which is the main feed in the system, can be addressed on site. There is a potential, once they look at this problem, in order to address we may have to do a major bypass of the system. If we have to do a major bypass of the system around the Roper Site and others to get the sewer to the plant it can be an extensive endeavor. However, I just wanted to keep you all informed. The construction company will be onsite next week. We have been working with them and they are gearing up. We will not know all of the details of that until they get into that. But that is the main pipe to get your sewer to the system."

Mayor Parham stated, "Thank you. And thank you again Mrs. Innis and your staff for all of your

strength, expertise and dedication. Because you are all the nuts and bolts in keeping the City of Petersburg moving and we cannot thank you enough.”

**9. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (to include minutes of previous meeting/s)**

- a. Minutes: Special Meeting: January 3, 2019
- b. Minutes: Organizational Meeting: January 3, 2019
- c. Request to schedule a public hearing to create Sec. 106-61. – Assessments generally and Sec. 106-63 Time for Assessment.
- d. Request to schedule a public hearing to create Sec. 106-66. – Deadline for appeal of assessment to City Assessor and Sec. 106-67. – Deadline for appeal of assessment to the board of equalization.
- e. Request to schedule a public hearing to create Sec. 106-68. – Assessment of new buildings substantially completed, etc.; extension of time for paying assessment.
- f. Request to schedule a public hearing for a Special Use Permit to operate a stand-alone used vehicle sale locate at 2128 West Washington Street.

Vice Mayor Hart made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda and to schedule public hearings for February 5, 2019. The motion was seconded by Council Member Smith-Lee. The motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Myers, Hart and Parham; Absent: Wilson-Smith and Hill

**10. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- a. A public hearing on the disposition of 453 Harding Street

**BACKGROUND:** The City-owned property at 453 Harding Street is the former Harding Street Recreation Center, and it has been utilized by Virginia State University as a Hydroponics Center. Prior to VSU utilizing the property, the facility was vacant and not in use, and it was in need of repair. Virginia State University has been leasing the property from the City and they would like to acquire the property to enable additional development of the property along with additional capital investment.

The City Council Standing Committee on Economic Development, Tourism, Land Use and Housing considered and approved this item during their last meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:** City Council considers authorizing the City Manager to dispose of vacant City-owned property at 453 Harding Street, Parcel ID 031-040056.

Marcus Comer, VSU Director of the Harding Street Facility, gave a brief presentation on the activities that are currently being held in the facility located at 453 Harding Street. He stated that it is used as an agriculture facility.

Ms. Jackson opened the floor for public comments.

Willie Noise, 1508 Circle Drive, stated “Harding Street is one of my main runs just about every day. I had property up there on the heights. The Harding Street Rec, I think is what we are talking about. I love Virginia State and I want them to be our host. But I have not seen any enhancement on the outside of the building. Whatever they are talking about has got to be in the inside. But the outside, I cut grass next to the property. There were flower boxes in front of the place. Me and another friend personally brought fruit trees and planted them ourselves, but they weren’t kept up. Across the street is flower boxes where they grow vegetables and stuff like that. I don’t think that it has ever been weeded or nothing. It is just a disgrace and the City of Petersburg, the maintenance of it is about the same way. I am a landscaper myself. And I do not like the appearance. And whoever is in charge is not doing their job. They should be placed on notice or

something. That's even with the Petersburg maintenance including the building themselves. They just letting them fall down. And I just wanted to share that with you. Thank you."

Celeste Wynn, 319 E. Fillmore Street, stated, "I am an employee of Virginia State University. I would love to see the two organizations come together and work together. Organizations meaning Virginia State University and the City of Petersburg. It is a good way to have our students in both entities do a hands-on project. It is a win situation that will bring jobs to the City of Petersburg. It will have a few employments for the residents of the City of Petersburg. Thank you."

Michael Edwards, 409 Grove Avenue, stated, "I am going to ask the question that we have not heard anything on yet. And it is what are we going to sell it for? The current assessor's records state that the building value is \$995,000 and the land value is \$22,400, which puts it over a million-dollar value. I remember when the hydroponics first started up on Harding Street. Because I went to the opening and it's a great thing to have up there. It's a good thing that we build a relationship with Virginia State University for numerous reasons. But I have seen so many properties before been just given away. So, if a price has been negotiated or not been negotiated I think we should know what that is going to be. Thanks."

Sara Melissa Witiak, 22 Centre Hill, stated, "I would just like to say that the hydroponic facility is very good asset for Virginia State University and its students. My students do research there and plant physiology and I have cooperated with Mr. Comer on many times. And I know that there has been a lot of frustration in terms of trying to coordinate multiple entities to get things taken care of. So, the City in some way need to make this more efficient. Partially because when VSU does get a grant, if things cannot be done in a timely manner, for instance then that grant money gets lost and then it hard to get those grants as well. I just really encourage that whatever you do whether it is transferring it to Virginia State in some way or finding another way to collaborate. I just encourage you to become much more efficient and responsive."

Seeing no further hands, Ms. Jackson closed the public comments.

There was discussion among City Council Members and staff.

Council Member Myers made a motion to give the City Manager the authority to negotiate and dispose of the property at 453 Harding Street to Virginia State University. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Hart. The motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Myers, Hart and Parham; Absent: Wilson-Smith and Hill

#### **19-ORD-08 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO NEGOTIATE AND DISPOSE OF THE PROPERTY AT 453 HARDING STREET TO VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY.**

11. **PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:** The Public Information Period is established by the Rules of Council to hear input from City residents or owners of businesses in the City. It will last for a maximum of 30 minutes. Speakers will be called in the order that they have signed up to speak. If there are ten or fewer speakers, each shall speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. If there are more than ten (10) people desiring to speak, the time allotted to each person may be adjusted or the number of speakers limited to meet the time limitation. A speaker may speak on items **except those that are listed on tonight's Council agenda.** Any matter brought before the attention of the City Council during the public information period will not be acted upon by the City Council at this meeting.

Brandon Martin, 1546 Berkeley Avenue, stated, "Good evening Mr. Mayor and Vice Mayor, Members of Council, the administration and citizens. First, some old business. Last September 2018, I offered some comments and some pointed questions. In the subsequent minutes that have been posted, I have been unable to locate any responses. I looked well on a few of these. Where are we on the missing money from the police evidence room. This incident happened over three years ago and there has been nothing done that I am aware

of. Next, where did the chandler that once hung in the Husting Court end up? Surplused and sold by the City, to whom and when? Second, at the October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting I commented on issues with my water bill concerning the amounts charged. There has never been a response to how the bill is calculated. Rates are implacable and the source of the amounts of tax being charged on my bill. I only learned from a fellow citizen that my charges reflect a one-inch meter and not a 5/8 which I thought that I had. It was news to me. At no time did anyone with the City bother to say that I was being charged with the higher one-inch rate because I had a one-inch meter. I inquired public works about the information on the meters at my residence since opening the account in 1975 and I was told that there were no records. How many others are in the same boat as I am? The meter size is on the dial, but it is much smaller print. You need to know exactly what you are looking for and what to see. Your bill doesn't say what size meter you've got. This is pathetic. Backing up I never did ask for a one-inch meter. So here we are. So, what's the status of getting a new data system to replace the AS400 that is 40 years old I think. New Question. Where is the water rate study and who performed it? When will it be made public? Secondly, what was the expense for the labor and equipment to vacuum the leaves this fall that was part of the public works presentation. I would like to know how many truck loads were collected and where did all these leaves go. As you walk out this evening take a look underneath the Martin Luther King Bridge and see how well-lit that is. It is dark and unsafe and inadequate. How about the online agenda for council? It would be nice if the 67 or 200 pages are with a table of contents. And how about an annual index updated with each meeting so that you can find stuff that was talked about, what was passed and what was discussed. There is nothing and it was really difficult to decide what is going on here. How about a moment of silence? You have done it again with the loss of John Nashville. A year ago, this month we lost the sewer factory on High Street. What else have we lost? It is all over the place. We used to have something called council communications, what happened to that? Thank you."

Lawrence McLaughlin, 115 Marshall Street, stated, "I would like to focus on the area of Jefferson Street, between Washington and Wythe Street. Jefferson is where the Liberty Gas Station is and the used car lot is. It is between that. The City was just told about it a while ago that they did a really nice job with coordinating handicap accessibility with that. Good job and clean job. Someone has already run over the corners and killed the grass. There are five trashcans on Jefferson Street across from the old Brown School which is now apartments. I noticed them for the first time in the middle of September. This is now four months later, and they are sort of permanently there. This is an easy fix job. Just one telephone call to the owner or owners. They have to take their trashcans in. And then two weeks ago they were doing some trimming and took a giant bush and they did not chop it up. So, now you have the sidewalk impossible to get by. Easy thing to fix with just a phone call that you have to take your trash back out. There is another easy to fix thing also on the entrance to Petersburg. When you are coming on Washington Street and you are turning left onto Liberty Street, some large vehicle comes over the curb and put big ruts in the grass. I was hoping that people would do a nice job with the corners and just wipe it down. I think the solution is that the City garage use to have a giant boulder. If I am driving a truck and I see nothing there I am going to drive over the curb too. If you guys just grade it, I will fill in the holes. That's it. An easy fix. Thank you."

Willie Noise, 1508 Circle Drive, stated, "I had about 11 things on my list this morning. So, I am going to go right through them real fast. Some of them were taken care of already. 7<sup>th</sup> Ward on Lincoln Street and Youngs Road, they came out and did a little cleanup and stuff which passed my approval for I don't know how long. The corner house on Halifax Street and Boydton Plank Road, there are a couple of problems that I saw. Need to have a code of painting a fence. This is the first time that I have ever seen anybody paint a fence and all the overage on it. Which might have required cutting the grass along the fence to get rid of all that obscene paint. They did not do. This has been going on for about six months. The same property needs a code for how much trash can be accumulated at one time. They had no container and they were remodeling the house. Everything they carried out and threw it in the driveway in the backyard. That went on for about six months and they finally did a little something. The Robert Rules of Council, I want to know what were some of the changes. Everything must of went alright because no one has said nothing. But we weren't as citizens given the opportunity to comment on it. I would like a report from VDOT on inspections of Youngs Road. Now Youngs Road has been a target for a long time with me because of the traffic. They have tracker trailers going through

there and everything. I have gone over to whoever is responsible for the maintenance in that area and I do not like the job that have done. So, I would like a professional, which I think is VDOT, to come in and take a look and write a report on it. Certification for lawn care and if you have five or more customers that involve the sidewalks, cutting the grass in the street and going down your property line with your exhaust on your lawnmower blowing all that grass on your neighbors' property. The insurance to fly drones and everything, that was addressed by the deputy chief of police, Officer Christian. I have been satisfied with the report he did but one thing that you need to ask your self is the guidelines, model aircraft, communities, and faith-based organizations. How many organizations do we have? We are going to need that to record it, so we can judge the activity as it goes on. It's going to get a little hectic before long. I am going to ask some questions when I come back. Thank you."

Celeste Wynn, 319 E. Fillmore Street, stated, "I actually had been at this request probably since 2013 and it really does not come into play with me until in remembering to bring it up over and over again, until we get in the fall and winter time when the days get shorter. But I have had police come out to look at the area this past spring before the days started getting longer. We had a car that was abandoned and caught on fire in that area. But there is an alley between East Fillmore and St. Andrews Street. Webster Street is on one end and I cannot think of the other street, but it is behind the women's home. That alley has a bright light from the women's home and a street light from Webster Street and in between it is pitch black. Because a lot of illegal activity goes on. Back in 2014 or 2015, I was told to call a Mr. Ernest Greene to inquiry about possible putting a street light back there in that area. I went through the protocol with going over and getting all of the signatures that I needed from my neighbors who requested the street light in that area. But a lot of illegal activity goes on. There is paraphernalia that is left in the alley. There was an issue of the car being left in there. Come to find out when the fire department came it was a car stolen from Henrico County. There are two homes down from me going towards the women's house. There is a lot of activity that goes on in that backyard and cars being parked. But I am letting you know that I have been at it since 2013 and 2014 and I have all the paperwork. I have done it twice. My neighbors have stated that they would like a street light in that alley, but nothing has been done and the action continues. Thank you."

Marcus Squires, 1701 Monticello Street, stated, "I am here to talk to you guys about the state of the school system here in Petersburg and more of the facilities. I saw on the sliding show that Westview was getting a new roof and that's great. But there is still other improvements that are needed throughout the other facilities and I hope that you guys can allocate some funds to the capital improvement plan for the school system. And I want to let you guys know that January 28<sup>th</sup> is the 'Red for Ed Day.' Wear red to support the school system and there will be a little walk out that day at Petersburg Public Schools to show that we all support the school system. Thank you very much."

Ron Flock, 1708 Pender Avenue, stated, "Just a couple of things. This utility delinquent collection plan is a good idea. But I have to question how we can change up the rules and demand such a faster turnaround for the residence to pay on these bills. We are talking 45 days. When the City cannot bill, collect and credit an account in 45 days. So, I think that as much attention as we are paying to that we need to pay as much attention to the utility department in getting their house in order. I noticed there was a slide that showed that the workforce had been reduced from 36 to 12 with a savings of approximately \$500,000. I would like to know what the number of management people has increased or decreased and what that savings or extra expense is. I would appreciate that information. And last of all is it possible if we can get somebody from this City trained on how to drive a snowplow. I complain about this every single year. I know it's a problem elsewhere throughout the City but nobody in my neighborhood parks on the street and we have one path cut through the middle of every street. There is two ways in and out of my neighborhood. You got two cars coming at each other. What they are doing is creating a greater hazard than if they just left it alone and stayed out of my neighborhood. If you cannot train somebody to drive a snowplow, then they have no business being in the truck. Thank you."

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "I want to make a couple of suggestions relating to

participation and transparency. One of those is that we have seen tonight as with many meetings there are some very good presentation put on by the administration of the City and sometimes other folks as well. Obviously, some things are in the agenda packet, but I am referring to the items that aren't. For example, the presentation on public works tonight. Also, the presentation on billing and collections and utilities billing. Both of those were really interesting. But what I would like to see is to have those posted on the City's website where citizens and other interested people can refer to them. And that's really kind of ideally and it would be to start going forward for a regular practice but also to go back and pickup some of the earlier presentations and post them. Because it is just as important as what is in the agenda and the minutes as far as the business that is being transacted. I have asked sometimes to get copies of things and people have been generally responsive, but I think if you look at the FOIA rules that if something is presented at a meeting it is supposed to be made public. I think right now we are a little bit lacked on that. My other comment or request relating to participation is, that I do not know if there is anyway for citizens to ask questions about some of the things that are brought out about any City presentation. I will give an example, the financial report. Sometimes there is really good information that should be brought into the discussion if we were allowed to ask questions. And right now, as the rules are stated it doesn't seem like we are. I haven't really talked with a suggestive way to do that, but I am just putting it out there to think about. I think participation can be valuable in both directions. Thank you."

Michael Edwards, 409 Grove Avenue, stated "I come before you today to speak on every growing issue plaguing our City, the issue of poverty. Many of our citizens endure the daily struggle of making whatever sacrifice is necessary to provide for their families. A mother sits up at night wondering if she will be able to provide food, shelter or clean clothes for her child the next day. Many are working two jobs with substandard pay in order to keep a roof over their heads while living in sometimes poor or substandard housing conditions. Even tonight as we sit here in this meeting a family that may have children will be going to bed cold, hungry or crying because of the living conditions they are in. Mr. Mayor let the record show that many of our citizens in Petersburg were not born into generational wealth. They were not born into the environment where ever need was cared for. So, its appalling when we hear that our less fortunate citizens are often referred to as 'these people' when things are brought before this elected body to help citizens gain a fighting chance in life to better themselves. And in ever ward in this City we have a vast array of incomes. And this council last year was provided figures on the income ratios throughout the City. And those making \$35,000 or less having the highest numbers. Those low-incomes are often referred to as 'these people' are in fact voters. So, I have to ask myself if there is such dissatisfaction of 'these people' then please do not ask for a vote come next election. There are no decent housing options here for our citizens with lower incomes. And when we have developers who are eager to invest in this City, despite all of out previous bad press, financial windfalls and growing discrepancy we should roll out the carpet and welcome them with open arms. As public record not shows a \$50 million plus investment is now in jeopardy of moving forward due to the long descending vote of council member bring the law suit against the City, zoning and the developers. I scratch my head on why an elected member of council would wish to stop a multimillion-dollar investment into a City that they were elected to help. I come up with one answer. The dislike of low-income individuals or 'these people.' The mission both present and past to stop anything related to helping these citizens obtain a better quality of life. This is not the good character of an elected representative having the best interest of the City in mind. And as I stated above generational wealth may be the topic for some but for many in this City it is a story of survival."

Cory Harris, 2316 Anderson Street, stated, "'We come, we inspire, and we grow.' That is the slogan of my campaign. Some of you know it. It's a black history campaign, but I have made changes. I have gotten behind this mic and talked about the issues when it comes to this City. How we should fix our image and we still have an image problem. We are making progress but as I told you before I am not focused on improving I am focused on winning. Mr. Edwards talked about poverty. I lived it. As an adult I have lived with roaches and I have lived with rats. So, I understand the struggle of the people in this City. And I am not ashamed of telling you of what I just said because I am not here to impress anyone. I care about the issues in the City and I care about the people and we should focus on trying to help the people in this City. For the past four years, I have tried to give my assistance when it comes to my marketing firm and have been ignored. I tried to record City

Council meetings and been neglected. Let me show you something. This little device here, when I first started I had 16 of these cameras. These cameras right here can easily be placed around Union Station. And for the citizens who cannot attend City Council, this device can help them see all of you and a better audio quality, so we can grow together. What I am trying to understand here is what do some of you want from me. I have come to this council on numerous occasions trying to help this City. I don't think you truly understand how bad our image really is. I am going to tell you right now. Three members of council have their names on white national sites. They have made threats against three of you. How do I know that? Because I found it several years ago. If you go back to Petersburg High School when we had the City Council and when you had a heavy police presence. Why do you think that happened? Why do you think Petersburg Police Department had a heavy presence there? It is because they got information about your safety. Think about it."

## **12. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FOR/FROM THE MAYOR OR COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "Thank you, Ms. Jackson. I want to give members of council a copy of a newspaper article that was published online yesterday and appeared in this morning Progress-Index. Its title, 'Dance's minimum-wage raise bill advances.' This is something that this council has endorsed and supported. I wish senator Dance the very best and success in getting this through. I think she is going to have an easier job with the Senate than she is going to with the House. I wish her the very best. Madam City Manager is there anything that this City Council can do to help advance this effort by this initiative that Senator Dance has started?"

Mrs. Benavides stated, "With most of the bills that come forward, there are public hearings that are available. And if council members would like to testify to those hearings we can work with Reggie to make sure you have a copy of the time or at least information on when they are going to occur. It is a short session this year so each bill that is being presented should have a public hearing at a committee level. So, I believe that they would appreciate the support of council on this. So, we will get that information from Mr. Reggie to City Council and also make sure that it is online for any bill of support."

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "That would be great for you to do that. This is something of a long shot but if we can get it through and give the opportunity for our citizens at the lower end of the income a scale to work their way out of poverty without creating a magnet that brings more impoverished people into Petersburg from surrounding jurisdictions. I wholeheartedly support this minimum wage initiative and I hope it succeeds. Madam City Manager let me turn to a comment that was made tonight by Ms. Celeste Wynn asking for street lights in the alley of the 300 block of Fillmore and St. Andrews. Will you look into that and determine whose responsibility that is and whether it is the City or Dominion Power and let council know at our next meeting. And if City Council can help bring that about."

Mrs. Benavides responded yes.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "Another issue is the rate study. I believe that at one time we were told by staff that we would expect it in November and then we were told that we could expect it in January. We are now at the second meeting in January and I haven't heard any timeline for presenting the rate study to council and I wonder if you could bring council up-to-date on that."

Mrs. Benavides stated, "I will ask Mr. Rogers who has been the lead for this."

Mr. Rogers stated, "We had a meeting with the consultant and our financial advisor on last Friday. They have given us a draft with a number of options. We have asked them to go back and grind some more as we try to look at options that will be affordable and at the same time to achieve the goals generating the financial review of the system. So, it will be another couple of weeks before we have this. If we don't have it at the next council meeting, then we will have a date on when we expect to deliver."

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "That would be great. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam City Manager, and thank you Ms. Jackson."

Council Member Smith-Lee stated, "I just want to thank you all for coming out. Also, Happy Founder's Day to the members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc."

Council Member Myers made a motion to recommend that the Rules of Council adopted in part be sent to the Committee of the Whole for review of the governing bodies operating procedures. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Hart. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Myers, Hart and Parham; Absent: Wilson-Smith and Hill

Council Member Myers stated, "Also, I was asked by Council Member Wilson-Smith, who could not be here tonight, to motion to reinstate the Anti-poverty Commission, however I wish to table that at this time. If I look at the Rules of Council, it says that you cannot serve on two committees. So, I need to address that with her and we will bring that back to the table. Other than that, that is it."

Vice Mayor Hart stated, "I have not items."

Mayor Parham stated, "Good evening again everyone. I just want to let everyone know that February 25<sup>th</sup>, Ward 3 and school board Chairman Pritchett will have a joint meeting at Vernon Johns at 6:00pm. Also, we have an important day coming up. I want to wish everyone a Happy MLK Day. We have all benefited from the works of Dr. King. I hope that everyone will take part in many of the services that are going on between Friday and Monday. Also, we ask everyone to join me on January 29<sup>th</sup> for the Grand Opening of our brand-new Petersburg YMCA. It was a great facility and is currently open. We will have the official ribbon cutting on January 29<sup>th</sup> and all are welcome. It will be at 10:00am.

**13. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA:**

No items for this portion of the agenda.

**14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

No items for this portion of the agenda.

**15. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

No items for this portion of the agenda.

**16. NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Consideration of a request to appropriate grant funds for Victim Witness awarded to the City of Petersburg.

**BACKGROUND:** The Office of Victim Witness is a state and federally funded program that supports crime victims, families and witnesses throughout the court process. The Victim Witness program ensures that victims are advised of their rights and feel empowered to testify. The Budget & Procurement Office, under the guidance of the Chief Operating Officer, budgeted in Fiscal Year 2018-19 the same amount of funding as the previous fiscal year due to the timing of when the grant program amounts are finalized. On July 23, 2018, the award letter was sent to the City of Petersburg notifying them that the Victim Witness Office would receive \$220,588.35 in Federal Funds and \$73,529.45 in State Special Funds for a total of \$298,118. Now that the City of Petersburg knows the correct funding level, we are bringing it before City Council to appropriate the additional funds that were awarded.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend City Council approve the attached appropriation ordinance in the amount of \$10,612.80.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to approve the appropriation ordinance in the amount of \$10,612.80. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Hart.

Ms. Jackson opened the floor for public comment.

Willie Noise, 1508 Circle Drive, stated, "I have heard of three reports that there was a little dispute in court and things between a man and a woman. And the man went to jail and the woman was out. And the rule is whenever somebody is let out of jail they are supposed to let the other person know that he is out. And that is not happening. One case is one too many. When you go home and hear that the person that you put in jail is in your house because they have a key. We need to check that out and see how accurate it is and whether they are on top of it or not."

Seeing no further hands, Ms. Jackson closed public comments.

The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Smith-Lee, Wilson-Smith, Myers, Hill, Hart and Parham

**19-ORD-09 AN ORDINANCE, AS AMENDED, SAID ORDINANCE MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING JULY 1, 2018, AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2019, FOR THE VICTIM WITNESS PROGRAM IN THE GRANTS FUND.**

**17. REPORTS/RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:**

Kemi Osoba, Public Relations Officer, read comments and responses from previous public information at the January 3, 2019, regular council meeting.

1. What regulations are there concerning drones and small airplanes in Petersburg?  
The City does not currently have ordinances specifically pertaining to drone use. However, the Federal Aviation Administration has regulations that govern drones for recreational use, Certified Remote Pilots, Public Safety and Government Use and Educational Use. These regulations are readily available at [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov).
2. What is the status of the Former Ramada Inn Site?  
An update report on 380 E. Washington St. (Former Ramada Inn Site) was delivered during the Council Meeting.

**18. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA:**

\*There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

**19. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM CLERK:**

\*There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

**20. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY**

\*There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

**21. ADJOURNMENT:**

City Council adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor