

The work session meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, October 4, 2022, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present:

Council Member Charles H. Cuthbert, Jr.  
Council Member Treska Wilson-Smith  
Council Member W. Howard Myers  
Council Member Arnold Westbrook, Jr.  
Council Member Darrin Hill  
Vice Mayor Annette Smith-Lee  
Mayor Samuel Parham

Absent: None

Present from City Council Administration:

Clerk of City Council Nykesha D. Lucas  
City Manager John March Altman, Jr.  
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams

**2. PRAYER:**

Mayor Parham stated, "Council Member Hill will lead us in our opening prayer."

Council Member Hill led the council meeting in prayer.

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor Parham led council and the citizens in the pledge of allegiance.

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

A quorum is present.

**5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (TO INCLUDE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S):**

Mayor Parham stated, "I will entertain a motion to add a first reading and scheduling for an ordinance to authorize the use of 135 North Union Street and 244 South Sycamore Street for rehabilitation of the Petersburg Hotel."

Council Member Hill made a motion to add the first reading and scheduling for an ordinance to authorize the use of 135 North Union Street and 244 South Sycamore Street for rehabilitation of the Petersburg Hotel. Council Member Westbrook seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Wilson-Smith, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Abstain: Cuthbert; Absent: Smith-Lee

a. Minutes:

-September 20, 2022 – Closed Session City Council Meeting  
-September 20, 2022 – Regular City Council Meeting

b. A request to schedule a public hearing and adoption of an ordinance previously approved by the

\*Audio available upon request.

City Council approving rezoning of the properties located at 235, 243, and 247 Hinton Street from R-3 to PUD for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.

- c. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance approving an amendment to the permitted uses previously approved with the current zoning B-2(c), General Commercial District with conditions, for the properties located at 601, 607, 613, 619, and 627 Old Wagner Road for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.
- d. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance approving a petition to rezone the property located at 970 Winfield Road from R-5, Multiple Dwelling District to M-1, Light Industrial District to permit the use for a solar electric generating facility for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.
- e. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance approving a petition for a Special Use Permit to operate a solar electric generating facility on property located at 970 Winfield Road for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.
- f. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance approving a petition for a Special Use Permit to establish and operate a stand-alone vehicle repair shop at the property located at 944 E. Wythe Street for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.
- g. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance approving a petition for a Special Use Permit to construct a telecommunication monopole tower on the property located at 2320 W. Washington Street for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.
- h. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance authorizing the City Manager to enter into a purchase agreement between the City of Petersburg and Bollingbrook Properties, LLC, and Worther G and Karen K. Becker, III for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.
- i. A request to schedule a public hearing and consideration of an ordinance to authorize the use of 135 North Union Street and 244 South Sycamore Street for rehabilitation of the Petersburg Hotel for October 18, 2022, Regular City Council Meeting.

Council Member Hill made a motion to approve the consent agenda with changes. Vice Mayor Smith-Lee seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call. On roll call vote, voting yes: Wilson-Smith, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, Smith-Lee, and Parham; Abstain: Cuthbert

## **6. SPECIAL REPORTS:**

- a. Proclamation for National Hispanic Heritage Month

Mayor Parham read the proclamation aloud.

Brian A. Moore, Director of Economic Development, accepted the proclamation for National Hispanic Heritage Month.

- b. Presentation by the Anti-Poverty Commission

Rosezelia Roy, chairperson of the Anti-Poverty Commission, provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

\*Audio available upon request.

## Key notes:

- The Anti-Poverty Commission's goal is to influence public policy to address poverty and the impact of poverty.
- Strategies are to address interventions by the local government of Petersburg in conjunction with the community and private sectors.
- The U.S. Census Bureau 2020 stated that Petersburg, Virginia poverty rate is 22.6%.
- From the information of Social Services poverty statistics, 66.1% of residents receive benefit services which include SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid, during the physical year of 2021.
- The Anti-Poverty Commission has taken the role of identifying strategies to reduce poverty. The focus areas are job creation, workforce training/education, healthy communities, transportation, financial literacy, policy/legislation & research/evaluation.
- Job creation would be used to focus overall poverty, extreme poverty, and concentrate poverty through increased employment.
- As of July 20, 2022, Petersburg's unemployment rate is 6.9%. The State of Virginia unemployment rate is 2.9%. This is stated in the Virginia Employment component.
- Based on comprehensive research, seven key traits of successful programs were identified as follows: Actively engage local business, use labor market data to drive decisions, treat education like a job, connect people to careers, provide wrap-around student services, tap innovative funding sources, and embrace evaluation.
- Various community related solutions to improve individuals' well-being among them are the following: community resiliency, community in schools, healthy community, health food choices and eliminating food dessert, gun violence and housing.
- They recommend that City of Petersburg provide funding to support the continued efforts of the Anti-Poverty Commission in its ultimate goal of reducing the poverty rate substantially. Poverty has a resounding negative impact on the city.

Mayor Parham stated, "Thank you Dr. Roy for the presentation.

## c. Presentation from Commissioner of Revenue

Brittany Flowers, Commissioner of Revenue, stated, "I come this evening for a recommendation for personal property due dates. Prior to 2014, the City of Petersburg had one due date of June 10<sup>th</sup>. Currently, personal property dates are February 28<sup>th</sup> and June 10<sup>th</sup>. The February date covers from January 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup> and June date covers July 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>. I am recommending that the personal property due dates be changed to June 5<sup>th</sup> to cover January through June and December 5<sup>th</sup> to cover July through December. This change will also change the due date for the vehicle license fee from June 10<sup>th</sup> to December 5<sup>th</sup>. We are a prorating locality that has on demand billing for those citizens and business owners who want to pay in installments prior to the due date and can avoid late fees if the due date is change to June versus February. The Commissioner of Revenue office faces several challenges in the February due date billing. Never knowing the timeframe that the third-party assessment would return the mass filing. There are two federal holidays in January, and we never know what the weather is going to be in January for us to be at work. These factors in the past have resulted to the city using Code of Virginia 58.1-3912, mailing bills 14 days before the due date which is not fair to any citizen or business owner. In addition, the personal property being due February 28<sup>th</sup> and business licenses are due the very next day, March 1<sup>st</sup> per Code of Virginia 58.1-3703.1 Changing the due dates will lesson the number of abatements that would need to be completed for those citizens who may trade-in or sale their vehicles in April for example but have already paid for January through June in February. With this proposed recommendation for this example the citizen or business owner will receive a bill from January through April that will be due June 5<sup>th</sup>. This will keep the business equipment, leased equipment and the machinery & tools due in June but June 5<sup>th</sup> instead of June 10<sup>th</sup>. I look forward to

\*Audio available upon request.

this recommendation being discussed and passed. But if not, we can work together to search and find another possible solution that would benefit all citizens and business owners in the City of Petersburg.”

**7. MONTHLY REPORTS:**

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

**8. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT:**

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

**9. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE:**

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

**10. UTILITIES:**

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

**11. STREETS:**

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

**12. FACILITIES:**

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

**13. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

- a. A presentation from Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) Virginia and Longwood Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, stated, “We are going to have two great presentations for you. There will be one from the executive director of LISC and one from our very own, Mr. Vandy Jones. We are looking at working with them as we reach out to our business community. And as we continue to move forward things are going to be partnered with them.”

Jane Farrar, Executive Director of Virginia LISC, George Piazza, Program Office, and Vandy Jones, Eastern Region Director of Longwood University, gave a brief presentation from LISC.

Key points:

- LISC is a community development financial institution also known as a CDFI.
- LISC is a national non-profit mission-based lender dedicated to pulling the playing field for individuals with small business owner’s in under served communities.
- They have integrated programs like economic development, affordable housing, and individual wealth building. All of which are designed to elevate in the communities that we serve.
- The strategies are enhanced by financial resources such as accessible loan capital that catalyzes revitalization and economic opportunity.
- Examples of work is partnering with the Cameron Foundation on a neighborhood revitalization strategy for Poplar Lawn. They also increasing and providing critical loan capital to projects.
- They have invested in new market tax credits in the Petersburg Public Library.

\*Audio available upon request.

- They completed a broadband study to better understand it.
- LISC provides direct financing. The loan amount is \$10,000-\$50,000 with no interest or fees and the loan term is three years. There is no collateral required as well. There are also no payments for the first six months. The business has to make an income or revenue of \$50,000.
- The loan is for hiring new staff; equipment, supplies, and inventory; marketing and consultants; website development and improvements; refinancing high-interest loans; leasehold improvements and renovations; certifications and trainings and bridge financing for contracts.

There was discussion among City Council and staff from LISC and Longwood University.

#### **14. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA:**

Mr. Altman stated, "I do not have anything this evening except to say that I got the pleasure of attending an event with the mayor today that was tremendous news for the City of Petersburg. So, having said that I am going to turn it over to the mayor so that he can tell what happened today that was good news for the City of Petersburg."

Mayor Parham stated, "Thank you Mr. Altman. Today we were in Richmond today at the biomedical park. We had a special presentation by the EDA about the 'Build Back Better Challenge' that the City of Petersburg was in partnership with the City of Richmond and applied for the grant. And we were one of the 21 projects selected from across the United States. So, today, they were there to have interactions with myself, Mayor Levar Stoney of Richmond, Presidents of VCU, VSU, and Brightpoint. Also, we had AMPAC, Civica and PHLOW to make the big announcement of the award. Also, we had a roundtable discussion of how much of a huge impact the growing pharma cluster we will have here in the City of Petersburg. I was able to have the discussion on how when Tobacco left the City of Petersburg and was really the beginning of our tailspin to our high poverty rates. And we never recovered. Our schools have suffered due to lack of funding and this just gives hope to a lot of the citizens of Petersburg. And I was able to advocate for that. And one of the biggest surprises that we had of the day was the new pharmaceutical manufacturing certificate that you can get from Brightpoint College. And we were there today, and a Petersburg resident was recognized. She was a single mom with two children who was unemployed and barely making ends meet. She was the first to graduate from Brightpoint with the pharma manufacturing certificate. She has a career now making over \$60,000 plus a year. So, a round of applause. There are a ton of people who say that these jobs are not for residents of Petersburg. That is not true, and the proof is in the pudding today. It was so nice to have her there to recognize her for being the first to show our young people and young families that there is a way to a long-term career. It is just a beginning. And the big part of that was getting the money for infrastructure. So, I was presented there today with the financial assistance award here to the City of Petersburg. It is for the Petersburg Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Project. We already got \$30 million dollars from the Commonwealth of Virginia. This is another \$8,848,700 for water infrastructure here in the city. So, we cannot do this alone, but I want to thank everyone from the city manager to our public works department and engineering who helped us to apply for that grant to get this funding. And this right here takes a lot of the burden off our citizens of Petersburg and making the necessary upgrades to our water and sewer system. But also, the federal government also saw the possibilities of how pharmaceutical manufacturing can expand in the City of Petersburg if we have the water capacity. And this would give us the water and sewer capacity that we needed to expand. So, thank you everyone from Joanne Williams, who helped to put this proposal in. At the time, Andrew Barnes was a big part of this as well. Paul Johnson and the public works team we have some extra money right here to get it done. So, now failure is not an option. We have the money, so let's go to work and make this happen. Thank you."

#### **15. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK:**

\*No items for this portion of the agenda.

\*Audio available upon request.

**16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:**

\*No items for this portion of the agenda.

**17. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Cory Harris, 2316 Anderson Street, stated, "I want to first talk about my friend, Florence Farley. Some of you know her has the first mayor of the City of Petersburg. A woman who worked at Central State Hospital, but she was a lot more, especially to me. She was a friend and a mentor, and she pushed me when no one else would. But, let me share a couple of things about her that you didn't know when it comes to Dr. Farley. The very house that she stayed in she had no choice to stay in. When she first got the house, she was intimidated or tried to be intimidated by business owners and council members because it was commercial space. She stood her grounds and she said that she was not going anywhere, and she stayed in that house when she could have lived anywhere until she died. Central State Hospital, when she first got the job, they forced her to eat in a certain area. Because they did not want blacks to sit at the table. And it got so bad that the governor got involved to force her to sit at a certain area. We want to celebrate her, but we should have celebrated her while she was alive. She did not ask much from any of you. She did not ask much from citizens. She just wanted everyone to have a voice. I am trying to hold back my tears because most of you think that you knew but you just didn't. She wanted the best for the city, and she loved the city. And she wanted all of you to do what is right for everyone. Not just a selective few, but everyone. And if the City of Petersburg is truly going to grow, we cannot ignore the people that are struggling, even those who are in the streets. Now, you say I am Petersburg, but when you say that you should say everyone. You should focus on everyone. You love your God, then love your people as well. Thank you."

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "Today, I received the council communicates. It is posted the day of the meeting. And this is the summary of the answer that was provided of my presentation two weeks ago. It says, 'City officials became aware of this issue,' which was the real estate tax billing problem. 'Shortly after real estate tax bills were mailed, the city is working on a solution that will not be burdensome to taxpayers. This will be announced soon.' I found that to be pretty underwhelming and disappointing. And here is why. We know that it is an issue, and it would be very hard to solve. I just spoke to Ms. Flowers. She is working on things which is reassuring to me, so I am going to put the positive part out there. But why it is not being shared with citizens if indeed it's been known about since shortly after the real estate bills were mailed is puzzling. So, puzzling to me that if this was known to city officials early in September, which is when the bills were mailed, I don't understand why I came here on September 20<sup>th</sup> and talked about it and all of you were surprised. At least most of all of you were surprised and some of you spoke to it at the meeting. That does not seem like a good thing for you as council in charge of the city to be blindsided by something like this. So, if I were you, I would have a management concern about that. I think that working on a solution is good. Not being burdensome is good and I am assuming you are still going to go after the money because we need that revenue. But bad news does not get better with time. I couldn't find anything on the website about it. The only thing that I found on collections was that back in September one of the responsibilities of collections was printing and mailing of all personal property and real estate tax bills. Now that description is missing which is interesting. So, its like no one is responsible for that now. It just seems like a strange way to handle it instead of actually putting something out there so that the citizens could look and say that there is an issue here, but the city is handling it and they have it under control and they are going to fix it and tell us something. And I am not talking about finding blame I am talking about just letting people know that they are going to be surprised. And I am just going to mention one example because Mayor Parham brought it to mine by mentioning Dr. Abdullah, the president of VSU. He is one of the ones that I looked up when I was doing my study. And his house experienced a high appreciation between 22 and 23. His first quarter bill was over \$500 less than it should have been. So, it would be kind of embarrassing to go back to him as an example of an individual that is going to be in for a shock. Mines was only \$27.54 less or something like that. So, I can deal with it. But \$500 is a lot to expect citizens to find out. And I am sorry if I bored any of you up there, but I

\*Audio available upon request.

think that it is a significant issue and I think not being open about it doesn't make it better. Thank you."

**18. ADJOURNMENT:**

City Council adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

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Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:

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Mayor