

City Council Minutes Regular Meeting March 13, 2023

PRESENT

Mayor Eddie Ellington, Presiding, Council Members Marion B. Williams, Lamont Noel, Melissa Elliott, Garry D. Daeke, Ola Thorpe-Cooper and Jason A. Spriggs

ABSENT: Sara M. Coffey and D. Michael Rainey

STAFF PRESENT

City Manager Edward T. Blackmon, City Attorney D. Rix Edwards, City Clerk Tracey Kimbrell, Finance Director Joey Fuqua, Police Chief Marcus Barrow, Interim Fire Chief Curits Tyndall, Development Services Director Corey Williams, Water Resources Director Christy Lipscomb, Customer Service Manager Shay Bennett, Human Resources Director Elgin Lane, Recreation and Parks Director Kendrick Vann, Downtown Development Manager Tracy Madigan

CALL TO ORDER

The 13 March 2023 Regular Meeting of the Henderson City Council was called to order by Mayor Eddie Ellington at 6:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The City Clerk called the roll. A quorum was present.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

By invitation from Mayor Ellington, members of Girl Scout Troops 1119 and 372 led the Pledge of Allegiance. Afterwards, Councilmember Ola Thorpe-Cooper offered the invocation.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

Girl Scouts Proclamation – Mayor Ellington said he was honored to have some of our local girl scouts and Ashley Bean, Regional Membership Manager in attendance. He expressed gratitude for the good work they do, as they are our future leaders. He then read and presented a proclamation pronouncing the week of March 12, 2023, National Girl Scouts Week.

OPENING COMMENTS

Mayor Ellington extended a warm welcome and expressed appreciation for those in attendance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Ellington asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda. Council Member Noel moved to accept the Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Council Member Thorpe-Cooper and unanimously approved.

The Mayor explained the new Agenda format. The Consent Agenda will now be at the beginning of the meeting and the approval of the minutes will be included within it. He commended the Manager and Clerk for the format changes.

CONSENT AGENDA

All matters listed under the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine and can be approved in one motion, unless a Council Member asks for separate consideration of an item.

City Manager Blackmon said there were two items on the Consent Agenda summarized as follows:

Approval of February 13, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

Tax Releases & Refunds from Vance County for the Month of January 2023 (Reference CAF 23-12)

The Finance Director has reviewed the following releases/refunds and found them to be in order. This action approves the tax releases and refunds for January 2023.

January 2023 Tax Releases & Refunds			
Name	Reason	Tax Year	Amount
Miscellaneous	Personal property billed in error	2022	\$ 1,552.82
Real & Personal Property Releases - Total			\$ 1,552.82
Real & Personal Property Refunds			
Miscellaneous	Personal property billed in error	2022	\$ 1,017.01
Real & Personal Property Refunds - Total			\$ 1,017.01
Gap Bill Discoveries			
Miscellaneous	Discoveries	2022	\$ 2,135.56
Gap Bill Discoveries - Total			\$ 2,135.56
Gap Bill Releases & Refunds			
Miscellaneous	Personal property billed in error	2023	\$ 512.01
Gap Bill Releases & Refunds - Total			\$ 512.01
Audit Discoveries			
			\$ -
Audit Discoveries - Total			\$ -
Total Refunds, Releases, & Discoveries			\$ 5,217.40

Council Member Williams moved the approval of the Consent Agenda. Motion was seconded by Council Member Spriggs and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ON AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Ellington advised that no citizens signed up to speak on agenda items and asked the Manager to proceed with the Work Session.

WORK SESSION

City Manager Blackmon explained that there were two items to be discussed in the work session tonight. Both are related to the police department's ongoing challenges with salaries, retention and hiring.

Mr. Blackmon said Councilmember Lamont Noel approached him with concerns of how our police department compares to other communities from a salary standpoint. The Manager noted that these challenges were shared and discussed at the recent Strategic Planning Retreat. He said a citywide salary and pay classification study is needed and will be recommended during upcoming budget discussions. Chief Barrow was asked to address Council and explain some of the challenges he is experiencing in his department.

Chief Barrow said the police department is currently short 12 officers which is roughly 25% of the agency. It is a struggle to keep an adequate number of officers. By the end of September, he will have lost two tenured Lieutenants to retirement. He referenced the salary map and charts he provided and said out of the 25 agencies he researched, Louisburg is the only agency that the Henderson Police Department (HPD) exceeds in salaries, and they are currently in discussions for a pay class study. Although he asked for pay increases for his department two years ago to combat the same problems, Henderson is not keeping pace with other agencies. The highest pay range on the regional salary map is Cary. He said he knows Henderson is not comparable to Cary or Wake Forest in many ways, but the Henderson Police Department competes with those agencies in hiring.

Mr. Blackmon was asked about salaries for senior staffing and handed out information related to this data. The Manager has had conversations with the Chief on his salary and said that he would be making that recommendation. If the resolution is approved, it will go into effect for non-exempt police officers after the action is taken and soon thereafter the positions such as chief, assistant chief and captain would also receive a comparable increase.

(Clerk's Note: Councilmember Elliott joined the meeting at 6:31 p.m.)

Mayor Ellington asked Chief Barrow where he is most affected by vacancies. The Chief responded that most of his vacancies are in uniform patrol and investigations. He tries to balance them out as much as possible because they incur a lot of overtime hours. Captains and even the Chief have had to cover shifts on the streets at times to lessen the strain on the department.

Chief Barrow explained that with the last homicide in Henderson, License Plate Reader (LPR) data from outside locations and other electronic data are what solved the case. Because of this data, they were able to get warrants and ultimately charge three individuals. He said the LPR not only takes pictures of license plates which can tell them if it is a fake registration, but it helps them by taking pictures of cars of interest. It is sophisticated enough that it can help locate cars by taking measurements of taillights and the car itself and then return matches.

Councilmember Spriggs asked about LPR locations because sometimes there is a focus on hotspots in a city. Chief Barrow said the locations would be completely data driven, fair, and transparent. Captured LPR data is only kept for 30 days, so it is not intrusive. The cameras are visible to the public. Ms. Elliott said she did research on the LPR and was impressed. She felt it would be very helpful with investigations and take some of the pressure off the overburdened department.

Chief Barrow said there is a onetime installation fee for Flock Safety, and he would like to pay this with Asset Forfeiture funds. The Recurring costs would be paid using the funds of one vacant police officer position. This funding would allow them to pay for 25 cameras. Mr. Daeke asked if it was a two-year contract. The Chief said it could be two to five years but the longer the better because he can lock in the current price. After his recent meeting with the company, he learned the cost of each camera will be increasing by \$500 per camera at the end of next month. Mr. Daeke asked about maintenance and if someone were to take a shot at the camera. Chief Barrow said Flock Safety is responsible for all

maintenance and insurance would cover the costs of a camera damaged beyond repair. Ms. Thorpe-Cooper asked if the cameras were higher up on the pole and if they were similar to toll booth cameras. The Chief said they were higher up and they were exactly like toll booth cameras but just different in purpose.

Mr. Daeke chatted online with a Flock Safety representative, and they advised that the cameras have the capability to read expired tags, but a local database would be needed to feed into. He felt the cameras would be even more beneficial if we could find some revenue in them. Chief Barrow said this is future possibility.

Mayor Ellington commended Councilmember Noel for advocating for the salary adjustments on tonight's agenda.

Reallocating Henderson Police Department Funds to Enter into a Contract with Flock Safety for the Deployment of License Plate Readers throughout the City (*Reference: CAF 23-13, Resolution 23-05*)

After a lengthy discussion in work session, Mayor Ellington asked Council how it wished to proceed.

Councilmember Elliott moved the approval of Resolution 23-05, *Reallocating Henderson Police Department Funds to Enter into a Contract with Flock Safety for the Deployment of License Plate Readers throughout the City*. Motion seconded by Councilmember Thorpe-Cooper and approved unanimously. (*See Resolution Book 7*)

Police Salary Adjustment for Hiring and Retention (*Reference: CAF 23-14; Resolution 23-06*)

Mayor Ellington asked Council how it wished to proceed.

Council Member Elliott moved the approval of Resolution 23-06 *Police Salary Adjustment for Hiring and Retention*. Motion seconded by Councilmember Thorpe-Cooper and approved unanimously. (*See Resolution Book 7*)

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Ellington advised that there were three citizens wishing to speak on non-agenda items.

Mary Hargrove – Ms. Hargrove requested a streetlight for the corner of Arch and William Streets as visibility is low at night. She also requested a safety gate and safety reflectors on Arch Street in the area of 631 and 632 Arch St. as there is a hole that is easy to fall in if walking or if driving at night.

Whitney Gulley – Ms. Gulley spoke on homelessness.

Greg Etheridge – Mr. Etheridge asked if it was time for Council to adopt an entrepreneurial style approach to governance. He listed six initiatives. First, Increased resources – sales tax benefit of .25%; Second – invest in downtown revitalization; Third – invest in frontline city employees; Fourth – take a direct personal role in addressing properties and structures that are not in compliance with ordinances; Fifth – support enforcement of the minimum housing code; Sixth – as a Council, hold each other accountable.

REPORTS

- I. Mayor/Mayor Pro Tem – Mayor Ellington said Congressman Don Davis held an informative Town Hall meeting at the library and he thanked Council Members Elliott, Coffey and Spriggs, the Manager and Police Chief for being there and supporting our newly elected congressman. The Mayor commended the City Manager and Clerk for their efforts in planning the recent Strategic Planning Retreat. Mayor Ellington attended the grand openings of the Rustic Barn Boutique on Garnett St. and Petco on Hwy 158. He encouraged everyone to visit these new stores. The Chamber's annual banquet is March 30th. Congratulations were offered to Finance Director Joey Fuqua and his team for receiving an award for excellence in financial reporting.
- II. City Manager – Manager Blackmon reported on the following:
 - a) He met with David Webb, an area director of Congressman Davis. He presented an opportunity for the City to submit a project appropriation request to their office.
 - b) He spoke with Representative Frank Sossamon regarding obtaining funding to ignite housing opportunities in the community.
 - c) NCCU has an Institute for Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and they are looking at a violence and terrorism prevention grant. They have selected Henderson as one of three communities to work with on implementing prevention capabilities and local threat assessment.
 - d) He spoke at the Pinkston Street Community Watch Group – Council Members Spriggs and Thorpe-Cooper were there as well as Tracy Madigan.
 - e) Council Members Elliott and Daeke will be holding a Town Hall meeting at Clearview Baptist Church in the first week or two of April. Other Town Hall meetings are expected to follow.
 - f) Community Cleanup is Friday, April 21st.
 - g) During the Manager's report going forward, the Manager will periodically be calling on a department head to give an update or announcement.
- III. Department – Recreation and Parks Director Kendrick Vann said they hosted three tournaments over the past weekend with 14 different teams across the State participating. The 8U boys won their tournament, 10U boys won, 14U boys placed second, and 12U boys placed second. He said perception is everything and all went smoothly. He thanked the Police and Sherriff's departments for keeping an appearance at the facility during the tournament to make everyone feel safe.

With no further business, Mayor Ellington asked if Council was prepared to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Elliott moved for adjournment. Motion seconded by Council Member Thorpe-Cooper and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Eddie Ellington
Mayor

ATTEST:

Tracey Kimbrell, City Clerk

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