MINUTES OF WORK SESSION
OF THE NEWPORT NEWS CITY COUNCIL
HELD IN THE 10TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
2400 WASHINGTON AVENUE
March 26, 2019
4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Saundra N. Cherry, D. Min; Marcellus L. Harris III; David H. Jenkins; McKinley L. Price, DDS; Sharon P. Scott, MPA; Tina L. Vick (arrived at 5:15 pm); and Patricia P. Woodbury

ABSENT: 

OTHERS PRESENT: Cynthia Rohlf; Collins L. Owens; Mabel Washington Jenkins; Joye Thompkins; Darlene Bradberry; Shelia McAllister; Flora Chiros; LaTara Roufe; Lisa Cipriano; Cory Cloud; Constantinos Velissarios; Maria Abilar; Keith Ferguson; Susan Goodwin; Florence Kingston; Matthew Johnson; Venerria Thomas; Everett Skipper; Louis Martinez; Frank James; Sonia Alcantara-Antoine; Stephanie Hautz; William Roche; Chief Steve Drew; Chief Jeffrey Johnson; Kevin Krigsvold; Raquel Cepeda; Colin Louis; Alan Archer; David Freeman; Kim Lee; Clered Jones; Eoghan Miller; John McMillian; Joanne Armstrong; George Parker; Mary Vause; Jerri Wilson; Lisa Bennette; Eoghan Miller; Brian Nichols; Gary Hunter; Rashad Wright; Indiana Brown; and Josh Reyes

I. 2020 Decennial Census

Ms. Cynthia L. Rohlf, City Manager, introduced Mr. Kevin Krigsvold, Partnership Specialist, United States Census Bureau, to provide an overview of the 2020 Census (a copy of the presentation, “2020 Census”, is attached and made a part of these minutes).

Mr. Kevin Krigsvold introduced his colleagues, Mr. Colin Louis and Ms. Raquel Cepeda, Partnership Specialists, United States Census Bureau. Mr. Krigsvold indicated there were a few issues facing the City of Newport News, e.g. job opportunities, Census Tracts and Low Response Scores (LRSs). He mentioned the U.S. Census counts every resident in the United States. Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution mandates that this occur every ten (10) years. The reason for a Census was to have an official count or survey of a population to help the community. The data collected by the Census determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and was also used to distribute billions in federal funds to local communities.
2020 Census

- U.S. Constitutional Mandate, Article 1, Section 2
- Apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives
- Conducted redistricting at the federal, state, and local levels
- Distributed over $675 billion federal dollars to state and local governments
- Provided statistical support for grant applications
- Helped community plan for future needs

Mr. Krigsvold indicated that when one responded to the Census, it helped the community receive its fair share of the more than $675 billion per year in federal funds that were distributed based on Census numbers. Every individual must be counted in the City of Newport News. He gave a one-on-one comparison of what could potentially be produced when the form was not completed, and the funds potentially lost. The general number used was about $2,000 dollars per person, which equates to $2,000 per year and totals $20,000.00 for the ten-year timeframe. This distribution included most federal funds spent on roads, schools, hospitals, disaster reliefs, public works, and other vital programs. The main reason for the Census was to obtain information from the City of Newport News to socialize the idea to have the forms filled out quickly. It was important for the individual and the community to complete the forms.

Mr. Krigsvold shared the “2020 Census Goals-50 Ways Census Data Are Used” was to generate funds that would return back into the community.

- Decision making at all levels of government.
- Drawing federal, state, and local legislative districts.
- Attracting new businesses to state and local areas.
- Distributing over $675 billion in federal funds and even more in state funds.
- Forecasting future transportation needs for all segments of the population.
- Planning for hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and the location of other health services.
- Forecasting future housing needs for all segments of the population.
- Directing funds for services for people in poverty.
- Designing public safety strategies.
- Development of rural areas.
- Analyzing local trends.
- Estimating the number of people displaced by natural disasters.
- Developing assistance programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Creating maps to speed emergency services to households in need of assistance.
- Delivering goods and services to local markets.
- Designing facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly, or children.
• Planning future government services.
• Planning investments and evaluating financial risk.
• Publishing economic and statistical reports about the United States and its people.
• Facilitating scientific research.
• Developing "intelligent" maps for government and business.
• Providing proof of age, relationship, or residence certificates provided by the Census Bureau.
• Distributing medical research.
• Reapportioning seats in the House of Representatives.
• Planning and researching for media as backup for news stories.
• Providing evidence in litigation involving land use, voting rights, and equal opportunity.
• Drawing school district boundaries.
• Planning budgets for government at all levels.
• Spotting trends in the economic well-being of the nation.
• Planning for public transportation services.
• Planning health and educational services for people with disabilities.
• Establishing fair market rents and enforcing fair lending practices.
• Directing services to children and adults with limited English language proficiency.
• Planning urban land use.
• Planning outreach strategies.
• Understanding labor supply.
• Assessing the potential for spread of communicable diseases.
• Analyzing military potential.
• Making business decisions.
• Understanding consumer needs.
• Planning for congregations.
• Locating factory sites and distribution centers.
• Distributing catalogs and developing direct mail pieces.
• Setting a standard for creating both public and private sector surveys.
• Evaluating programs in different geographic areas.
• Providing genealogical research.
• Planning for school projects.
• Developing adult education programs.
Mr. Krigsvold reminded over years past, Census surveys were conducted via mail. A new design was created for the 21st Century. The surveys would be mailed with instructions for submitting the surveys electronically. The new on-line response option made it easy for people to respond anytime and anywhere. Other options included on-line/internet, phone, in person, e-mail, fax, and door-to-door services. The Census asked questions of people in homes and group-living situations, including the number of people who lived or stayed in each home, and the sex, age and race of each person. The goal was to count everyone, only once, and in the right place.

Mr. Krigsvold commented about the City of Newport News Census Tract and Low Response Scores. The Response Outreach Area Mapper (ROAM) showed eight areas in the City of Newport News with LRS above 30 percent. The ROAM application predicted the areas where responses to the Census could be very low. A high percentage predicted a lower response to the Census 2020. ROAM helped identify the hard-to-survey areas, and provided socioeconomic and demographic information. The legend in this application identified areas of concern for LRSs between the 30%-49% percent in the City of Newport News. The levels shaded in dark blue were low response areas that needed to be focused on. Light areas are not as problematic. The approach would be knocking door to door asking the community for help, to resolve why the surveys were not being completed.

1. Tract# 323 32.4% LRS Fort Eustis
2. Tract# 322.25 30.6% LRS Between Mercer Lane in the North and Denbigh Boulevard in the South
3. Tract# 322.12 31.4% LRS Between Denbigh Boulevard in the North and Bland Boulevard in the South
4. Tract# 320.06 32.5% LRS Between Bland Boulevard in the North and Youngs Mill Lane to the South
5. Tract# 308 31.9% LRS Between 48th and 39th Streets
6. Tract# 306 31.6 %LRS Between 39th and 30th Streets
7. Tract# 304 31.9 %LRS Between 39th and 16th Streets
8. Tract# 301 38.0% LRS Between 38th and City limits with Suffolk

Mr. Krigsvold stated the United States Census Bureau protected data and information was kept confidential. The law required the Census Bureau to keep private citizens’ information confidential and use responses only to produce statistics. The Census Bureau could not publicly release an individual’s responses in any way that could identify them, their business, organization, or institution.
All information collected by the Census Bureau under the authority of Sec. 9, Title 13 of the U.S. Code (13 U.S.C. 9) was strictly confidential. The same law that required individuals to respond to the Census also guaranteed the confidentiality of respondents.

By law, the Census Bureau could not share individual responses with anyone, which included the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Internal Revenue Service, state or federal welfare departments, or governments and programs. Census workers were required to pass a security check. They were sworn to uphold a pledge of confidentiality. The penalty for violating the confidentiality of responses was up to a $250,000 fine and up to a 5-year prison term. No court of law can have access to individual census responses, not even the President of the United States could get access to this information.

Mr. Krigsvold requested the City to establish a Complete Count Committee (CCC). The CCC would represent a broad range of community interests, would play a major role in conducting Census outreach, and promotion activities for its community and its members. This was especially for areas that are the most problematic and able to target. This was an opportunity for everyone to play a key role in developing partners to educate and motivate residents to participate in the 2020 Census. The decision of all aspects of the committee, meetings, and schedules would be left entirely up to Council. The Mayor would designate individuals as needed to the CCC.

**Benefits of Forming a Complete Count Committee (CCC)**

- Increase the response rate for residents returning their questionnaire through a focused, neighbor-to-neighbor program.
- Utilize the local knowledge, expertise, and influence of each Complete Count Committee member to design and implement a census awareness campaign targeted to the community.
- Bring together a cross section of community members whose focus was 2020 Census awareness.

Mr. Krigsvold urged that sub-committees be used for outreach information to provide an opportunity for everyone to be counted. Having an outreach such as Tribal, state, and local governments; community based organizations; faith-based groups; schools; businesses; the media; and others, played a key role in developing partners to educate and motivate residents to participate in the 2020 Census. When community members were informed, they were more likely to respond to the Census. Through collaborative partnerships, the U.S. Census Bureau and community leaders could reach the shared goal of counting EVERYONE in 2020.
Mr. Krigsvold advised that the timeline for Census Day was April 1, 2020. There were many actions needed prior to Census Day.

**2020 Census Timeline**

**Fall 2018**
Recruitment began for early census operations.

**Fall 2019**
Recruitment for peak operations in 2020.

**August – October 2019**
In-field address canvassing where needed.

**March – July 2020**
Internet Self-Response.

**March – July 2020**
In-person or follow-up interviews.

**March – September 2020**
Census Questionnaire Assistance via telephone.

**April 1, 2020**
Census Day – Respondents will be able to respond via internet, telephone or paper questionnaire.

**December 2020**
U.S. Census Bureau delivers population counts to President for apportionment.

**March 2021**
U.S. Census Bureau delivers redistricting data to states.

Mr. Krigsvold mentioned about five thousand (5,000) positions would be available in the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia areas that specifically had low scores. Job salaries began from $12.00 per hour and ranged up to $43.00 per hour. One of the employment benefits was having the opportunity to work from home and creating flexible hours. He suggested visiting the website at Census.gov to obtain more employment information. Mr. Krigvold reminded that each individual was roughly worth $2,000, and wanted to ensure that every single person completed the forms. The funds would come back to help aid the community.

Councilwoman Cherry inquired about the specific localities of Census Tract #301 and Census Tract #308. Mr. Krigvold replied the ROAM provided the demographic information
on the community. This information was open to the public was available on-line at www.Census.gov and the demographic information would be provided on the community. Councilwoman Cherry indicated it would be helpful to have the information provided to the City instead of researching the information on our own. City Manager Rohlf supported Mr. Krigvold and replied that information would be provided in order to help the Census. Councilwoman Cherry suggested that providing information would be helpful to know where the specific Tract were located. If social media was utilized in order to obtain the responses, she needed to know where the tracts were located. Individuals or operations may not have access to other materials being accessed. City Council would like to be vigilant of making sure the Census received what was needed from the City.

Councilwoman Scott inquired whether undocumented workers were included in the Census even though they may reside temporarily in the City of Newport News. Mr. Krigvold responded yes, include every single person whether they were citizens. He reminded that everyone needed to be accounted for in 2020.

II. Fiscal Year 2020 Recommended Operating Budget Overview

Ms. Cynthia L. Rohlf, City Manager, stated that she was pleased to provide the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget. She advised there were three factors that were considered as staff went through the budget process: 1) Continued investment in employees and maintain salary structure; 2) Provide support for Public Schools; and 3) Continued investment in the City’s infrastructure, and organizational equipment to promote efficiency and public safety purposes. City Manager Rohlf indicated she would schedule individual meetings with members of City Council to discuss the budget. She introduced Ms. Lisa Cipriano, Director, Department of Budget & Evaluation, to provide a brief overview of the budget. She extended appreciation to Ms. Cipriano and staff of the Department of Budget and Evaluation, as well as the members of the Budget Committee for their work on the budget.

Ms. Cipriano stated that financial matters were improving and noted revenue and expenditure impacts realized while preparing the FY 2020 Recommended Budget (a copy of the presentation, “Overview – Fiscal Year 2020 City Manager Recommended Operating Budget,” is attached and made a part of these minutes):

- Major Revenue Impacts
  - Increased in Real Estate Assessments across each property classifications
    - Growth equally balanced between residential and commercial/industrial markets
  - Continued growth in other local taxes at a slower pace
  - No new taxes, no changes in tax rates
• **Major Expense Considerations**
  o Increased Debt Services for City and School Capital Projects (do more with less, do more with what we have)
  o Investment in Employee Compensation, including full year funding of Public Safety salary adjustments in FY 2019 to address staffing and hiring needs to be competitive within Hampton Roads
  o Increased Operational Efficiencies
  o Maintenance of programs and services

• **Major Budgetary Focus**
  o Solidifying Public Safety, advancing current momentum (faster, better, smarter)
  o Promote Community Revitalization throughout the City
  o Support an environment that promotes financial stability for all citizens
  o And health for all community members

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired about an increase in residential assessments. Ms. Cipriano replied yes, there was increase in residential assessments.

City Manager Rohlf advised that public safety was one of the three major improvements she hoped to make in the budget, along with community renewal and revitalization, and individual wealth building. For wealth building, she expressed the funding need for workforce development sites in the Southeast Community and new job, dedicated to finding and writing grants. In an effort to support renewal and revitalization, the budget included funding for:

• A neighborhood clinic in Marshall-Ridley’s Choice Neighborhood Area.
• The new Four Oaks Day Service Center (seven days per week operations).
• The mental health court established in 2018 and repaired fire stations.
• Full year funding for the Brooks Crossing Innovation and Opportunity Center to create a Workforce Development Center.
• Continued funding for the Behavioral Health Docket as a specialized court to better address those with legal charges with serious behavioral health issues.

Ms. Cipriano advised the City’s ongoing challenges was supporting financial stability and community growth for citizens. The Recommended Budget provided funding to support this effort included:

• Full year funding for the Brooks Crossing Innovation and Opportunity Center to create a workforce development center
Increased local grant match for the TANF Navigation Wealth Building for the residents of the Marshall Ridley Choice Neighborhood (CNI)

- Added local funding for the Child Services Act (CSA) program under Human Services Department
- Added one (1) Grant Writer position

Ms. Cipriano indicated that FY 2020 was the first time observations showed growth across all classifications for the fifth consecutive year. For the most part, it was equal between both commercial and residential property values, with residential property assessments anticipated to be higher across all price points. The City’s taxable levy was approximately 60% residential properties and 40% industrial commercial properties. The City had to be conservative and prepared for a future debtor in the event of a crisis. She reiterated most important factor was that there was no change in the tax change rate.

Councilwoman Woodbury questioned whether there was an increase in Real Estate Assessments. Ms. Cipriano replied, yes. Based on early indications from the City Assessor, approximately 35% of the residential properties would have no growth and no change. The overall projected increase for all properties, residential, commercial/industrial, and all other parcel types was 2.7%. The increased assessments lead to an increase in estimated real estate tax collections of $3.1 million, bringing total real estate tax revenue to $186.6 million for FY 2020. Machinery and Tools Tax revenue, along with Personal Property Tax and Sales and Meal Tax revenues, were also anticipated to have slight increases in FY2020.

Ms. Cipriano indicated the City’s National Employment Rate was extremely low. To enhance the process for developing the operating budget, departments developed a base level budget for each functional area. Departmental operations were evaluated, and encouraged to develop budget priorities to ensure that budget recommendations addressed issues and needs in a comprehensive fashion. This was part of the expenditure pressure in looking for all operational efficiencies.

**Total Operating Budget Overview**

Ms. Cipriano reported the Components of the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget totaled $900,504,186, an increase of $17,740,123, which was 2% higher than the adopted budget for FY 2019. The FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget included the following:

- General Fund $497.6 million
- City Support to Schools Operations $110.9 million
Debt Service $ 8.8 million
Total School Budget $314.2 million
Waterworks Fund $ 93.7 million
User Fee Funds $ 59.6 million
All Other Special Revenue & Trust Funds $232.0 million

Ms. Cipriano pointed out that the FY 2020 Recommended General Fund Operating Budget would amount to approximately $497.6 million, including $3.2 million in Federal and State grant funds. Regarding the NNPS Superintendent’s FY 2020 suggested budget, the City’s contribution of $110.9 million, was the same as the FY 2019. City Manager Rohlf and Ms. Cipriano pointed out that total did not include approximately $2 million for new furniture at the new transportation center and $6.3 million for capital projects. They shared the State had increased its funding for schools, providing $16 million since 2017.

Ms. Cipriano advised the funding that was requested by the Newport News Public Schools (NNPS) Superintendent’s Recommended Budget funding with the level of funding from the City Manger’s Recommended Budget, prior to the Schools Boards adoption, had not changed. The only difference, reflected in the presentation, was $2.4 million of City funding, versus the $5 million that the NNPS Superintendent recommended to the School Board.

General Fund Revenue

Ms. Cipriano reported the FY 2020 Recommended Budget totaled $900.5 million, and represented a $17.2 million (2.0%) increase over FY 2019. She noted the FY 2020 Recommended Budget included:

- General Fund $497.6 million; increase of 2.2%
- City Transfer to Schools $110.9 million; increase of 0.6%
- Debt Service (School Projects) $8.1 million; decrease of 8.0%
- School Fund $304.9 million; increase of 2.3%
- Waterworks Fund $ 91.7 million; increase of 1.1%
- Wastewater Fund $ 21.7 million; decrease of 3.6%
- Solid Waste Fund $ 14.6 million; decrease of 2.0%
- Stormwater Fund $ 22.0 million; increase of 1.4%
- All Other Special Revenue Trust Funds $427.5 million; increase of 1.7%

Ms. Cipriano noted the percentage composition of the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget:
Councillwoman Cherry inquired about the debt service in FY 2019 of $8.1 million, and in FY 2020 of $8.8 million for the School Board Superintendent Recommended Budget. Ms. Cipriano explained the Newport News School Superintendent presented the budget to the School Board that requested $2 million from the City. The City Manager’s Recommended Budget recommended level funding of $110 million. The number of $314 million dollars represented the School’s Superintendent $316 million budget, minus additional funding from the City.

Ms. Cipriano discussed the General Fund Operating Budget of the recessionary years from FY 2009 to FY 2020. The growth of FY 2014 was primarily due to the tax rate change that City Council adopted. Another change occurred in FY 2016 when the City received routine and regular grants from the Federal and state portion, and incorporated revenues and matching expenditures in the operating budget. This would avoid City Council having to appropriate grant, each individually funded grant.

Ms. Cipriano explained the revenues included current delinquencies, public service corporations’ revenue, and the value of tax relief. Based on the tax assessment growth of 2.7%, the City anticipated a change of $3.1 million. The value of the real estate assessment would be incorporated with the change in the number of disabled veterans, as well as the change in property value. She indicated, in the first year of tax relief, there were 168 disabled veterans’ participants at a value of $374,000. This was considered a permanent exemption and a Constitutional change that applied to a surviving spouse. The General election also had a Constitutional change that provided the exemption to a surviving spouse to change residence. This exemption must be provided to the locality. Ms. Cipriano showed that a decrease occurred in FY 2012 with 168 participants in tax relief at $375.00. Six hundred seventy six (676) participants were anticipated in FY 2020 at a value of $650,000. (see information on page 14 of the presentation attached to these minutes).

Ms. Cipriano reported the change in General Fund Revenues FY 2020:

- Real Estate Tax $196.1 million; increased by 1.6%
- Personal Property Tax $56.5 million; increased by 3.1%
Machinery and Tools Tax $24.4 million; increased by 5.6%
• BPOL Tax $16.9 million; decreased by 1.2%
• Sales Tax $25.8 million; increased by 4.0%
• Meals Tax $26.7 million; increased by 3.1%
• State Aid $68.3 million; increased by 2.2%
• All Other Taxes/Fees $79.7 million; increased by 1.5%
• Federal/State Grant funds $3.2 million; increased by 10.3%

Ms. Cipriano reported the FY 2020 General Fund Revenue totaled $497.6 million, and represented a $10.7 million or a 2.2% increase over FY 2020. She noted that the City of Newport News was the highest generator of machinery and tools tax in the State of Virginia. She recognized the collection pattern primarily due to the industry expansion within the City. The City of Newport News was number one in the state with $22 million. The Machinery and Tools Tax was a tremendous and critical revenue source.

Ms. Cipriano shared the projection for Machinery and Tools tax plus the Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax of $17 million, represented $.25 on the tax rate, or 1.2% less, to reflect the collection trends. The Sales Tax for January 2019 was $9,700 below in January 2018, but averaged over a seven (7) month period, $2.2 million per month in sales tax revenue. She informed that $1.5 million more was received for State Aid FY 2020 dedicated Human Services programs, with growth in foster care, special needs, and adoption programs. The City recognized $1.5 million received for street and highway maintenance funds, as well as a high vacancy rates for Constitutional Officers, for which the City would not be fully reimbursed. This was a net increase of $1.5 million for FY2020. Taxes and fees from revenue sources ranging from building permits, fines, Parks and Recreation Fees, would generate a combined increase of $1.2 million. She also noted $300,000 in Federal and State grants totaled $2.7 million in new revenue.

Councilwoman Woodbury inquired about the reimbursement to the Newport News Police Department. Ms. Cipriano indicated there is no reimbursement. The State only showed level funding of House Bill 599 (HB599) received over $9 million, which was leveled from FY 2018.

Ms. Cipriano noted the percentage composition of the City’s Revenue Stream:

• General Property Taxes 56%
• Other Local Taxes 21%
• State Revenue 14%
• City Fees and Charges 9%
• (80% or $386 million was from two major revenue streams)
Ms. Cipriano noted detailed revenue changes anticipated in the FY 2020 Recommended Budget. She stated 77% of the $486.5 million FY 2020 General Fund Revenue fell into two areas:

- General Property Taxes - 56% (Real Estate, Personal Property and Machinery and Tools Taxes)
- Other Local Taxes - 21% (Sales, Meals, Lodging and BPOL Taxes)
  Maintaining tax rate at $1.22 per one hundred of assessed value

(With the increased levy anticipated for the FY 2020, one penny was worth $1,591,000)

Ms. Cipriano stated for FY 2020, the estimated revenues for the General Fund Revenue, aligned closely with collections for the FY2019, with slight growth. Locally generated Machinery and Tools Tax revenue continued to grow to an estimated $24.4 million, an increase of $1.5 million over the FY2019. She indicated this growth is mainly attributed to industry expansion in the City. Personal Property Tax revenue was estimated to increase to $56.3 million, which was $1.7 million or 3.2% based on projected FY2019 actual collections.

Ms. Cipriano shared that Sales and Meal tax revenues estimated $26.8 million are steady for FY2020. It is prudent to project limited revenue increases in the sales tax, $950,000 and meals tax, $775,000. The projection for the Business, Professional, and Occupational License Tax (BPOL) revenue was lower than the FY2019 by $185,000 or 1.08% less to reflect the collection trends for the past three fiscal years. BPOL revenue was estimated at an aggregated $16.9 million for FY2020.

General Fund Expenses

Ms. Cipriano noted the FY 2020 proposed General Fund Expenditure Changes:

- Debt Service Increase for City and School Capital Projects
- Employee Compensation
- Baseline Budget helped lead to repurposed expenses to support Public Safety, Community Revitalization, Supported an environment that promoted Financial Stability and health of all Community members
- Contractual Obligations

Ms. Cipriano shared the General Fund support for the City’s Debt Service payments for outstanding General Obligation Debt was increased by $3.4 million to $46.3 million in FY 2020. The City was able to impact the least way possible by maximizing borrowed dollars. City
Manager Rohlf commended Ms. Cipriano, who worked hard to make that happen. A great deal of effort was done by Ms. Cipriano and the City’s Financial Advisor to allow the City to borrow what was needed and move forward. Councilwoman Woodbury questioned whether the Reserves had been touched. City Manager Rohlf responded, no.

Ms. Cipriano reported the FY 2020 General Fund Expenditures totaled $497.6 million, representing $10.7 million or a 2.2% increase over FY 2019. She noted the proposed changes in FY 2020 General Fund Expenditures:

- **Salaries** $150.7 million; increased by 2.7%
- **Fringe Benefits** $75.6 million; decreased by 1.8%
- **City Support for NNPS**
  - **Operations** $110.9 million; increased by 0.0%
  - **Debt Service** $8.8 million; increased by 8.6%
- **City Debt Service** $37.5 million; increased by 7.8%
- **Contractual Services** $21.7 million; decreased by 7.4%
- **All Other Operating Costs** $89.2 million; increase by 3.5%
- **Federal/State Grant funds** $3.2 million; decrease by 10.3%

Ms. Cipriano shared the City of Newport News had a low unemployment rate, leading to greater competition for applicants in the region, which formed an appropriate compensation package to attract and retain talent in public service.

Ms. Cipriano described the three major expenditure areas associated directly with the revenue generated for FY2020:

- Additional debt payment (debt Service) costs
- Employee compensation
- Full year funding of public safety salary adjustments

Ms. Cipriano advised that eligible employees would earn a 2% merit increase effective July 1, 2019. She reminded that this was the second year for merit increases available to City employees. Employee increases would continue to be based on individual employee’s performance. She pointed out there was neither a general wage adjustment, a flat salary increase, nor did the City provide step increases for any positions (except for limited entry level increases for sworn police and fire positions) The cost of this 2% merit increase in the General Fund totaled $2.8 million and an additional $990,499 for all other operation funds.
Councilwoman Cherry questioned whether the 2% merit increase would be based on an employee’s performance. City Manager responded yes, it would be based on the employee’s performance, 2% on an average, but ranged from 0% to 4% for higher performers. Councilwoman Cherry advised, at some point, she would like to discuss what it would take to receive 2%. City Manager Rohlf advised that she would be glad to share the process, as this was a personnel matter.

Ms. Cipriano indicated in addition to employee increases, there were two other compensation components to the FY 2020 Recommended Budget. Pay grade ranges would be adjusted for the first time in six (6) years. The entry level of each grade would increase by five (5) percent, with the top of the range increased by 1.5%. The cost of this adjustment totaled $211,682 for the General Fund, and $97,373 for all other operating funds. The City made necessary mid-year salary adjustments for all public safety personnel to include Police, Fire, and Sheriff’s Deputies.

Ms. Cipriano stated the $497.6 million proposed for the FY 2020 General Fund expenditures fell into four areas (see information on page 25 of the presentation attached to these minutes).

Ms. Cipriano noted the breakdown of the $497.6 million FY 2020 General Fund Expenditures:

- Salaries and Fringe Benefits $226.4 million; 45%
- Support for Schools $119.7 million; 24%
- All Other Costs $114.0 million; 23%
  - Community Regional Support $11.6 million
  - Vehicle and IT Replacement $4.0 million
  - Contractual Services $21.7 million
  - Utilities, Vehicle Fuel $8.7 million
- Other City Debt Service $37.5 million; 8%

Ms. Cipriano reminded, since FY 2016, the City had met 100% of the Actuarial Recommended Contribution (ARC) for fiscal soundness of the Newport News Employee Retirement Fund (NNERF). For FY 2020, the annual contribution to the pension system would total $40.1 million City-wide, $8.7 million of School Division support, and $4.7 million from the 5% salary contribution of all NNERF employees. As members of the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), the City fully funded the annual contribution for those employees hired in one of the three VRS retirement plans. The City’s VRS rate was 5.67% for FY 2020, resulting in the FY 2020 General Fund payment of $3.4 million. As NERF employees retired, VRS employee’s contributions would increase by $600,000, at a net change of $100,000.
Ms. Cipriano advised that the FY 2020 General Fund Healthcare Costs amounted to $25.7 million, which resulted in an $813,000 increase over FY 2019. The City would absorb 5.2% of the increase with employees required to pay 5.2% of the increase.

Ms. Cipriano stated the majority of the City’s operating costs were in salaries and fringe benefits. For 2020, all departments were asked to review positions and functions to identify adequate staffing levels for existing services. There would be a net decrease of one position in the General Fund. Ms. Cipriano noted the FY 2020 Position Changes:

- FY2020 Position Changes General Fund

- 13 Positions Eliminated – Community Maintenance positions
  - reassignment to the Sheriff’s Office
    - (10) Correctional Officers
    - (1) Community Maintenance Administrator
    - (1) Corrections Sergeant
    - (1) Senior Corrections Officer

- 12 Positions Added
  - (3) Police Officers
  - (2) Assistant Commonwealth Attorneys
  - (1) FOIA Technician for the NNPD
  - (1) Community Paramedicine Officer
  - (1) Assistant Fire Chief
  - (1) Codes Permit Technician
  - (1) Park Maintenance Specialist
  - (1) Graphics Specialist
  - (1) Grant Writer

Ms. Cipriano noted major adjustments to the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget:

- Average 2% Salary Adjustment $2.8 million
- Increase City Debt Service $2.7 million
- Increase Schools Debt Service $737,331
- Increase in Local, State, Federal Grant Match $485,000
- Brooks Crossing Opportunity Center $348,420
Ms. Cipriano stated the City support for schools was recommended at level funding for operations. The City would increase an additional $737,000 in additional in debt service for City funded school projects. In addition to all other debt service, it totaled $3.4 million. In Contractual services there were several items to be funded, i.e. 1.5 million for street and highway maintenance; $100,000 for camera security maintenance to be paid out of bond funds, but recommended to be paid out of cash. She stated $600,000 was allocated in expanded services for Department of Human Services (DHS) programs and approximately $208,000 in contractual services for the Police Department also needed to be funded.

Councilwoman Scott questioned whether the support for schools was included in the budget as requested by Dr. Parker. Ms. Cipriano responded, no. The School Board made other changes that would have increased the City’s share. The Superintendent requested $2 million, but the City Manager recommended level funding at $110.9 million.

Ms. Cipriano shared there were other operating costs such as rent payments for DHS in Rouse Towers, Innovation Center in Brooks Crossing, and full funding for the Four Oaks Day Service Center. She advised that Cash Capital would increase to $217,000. The City’s local grant match to support the approximately $900,000 that the City received from the TANF grant was $185,000. The cost for doing business for Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) had increased by approximately $170,000. There was a commitment to match the City’s Child Services Act funds of $250,000 in future years. Federal and State grants increased $300,000 to match revenue. This totaled $10.7 million in new revenue.

Councilwoman Scott inquired about the funds for child services in the amount of $250,000. Ms. Cipriano responded that amount was developed for each at risk child enrolled in educational programs administered through Human Services.

Councilman Harris asked for further explanation on the difference in the funds allocated for level funding for schools as opposed to funds allocated for debt service. City Manager Rohlf stated debt service was a legal commitment. It was the increase associated with the additional debt that was removed from the school projects. It was not $700,000; but was an obligation on the City’s side. The advised level funding recommended for the operating fees, not
the capital fees of the schools was level funding based on information from the NNPS proposed budget and funding NNPS received from the State.

Councilwoman Scott inquired about the State’s extra funding for the schools City Manager Rohlf responded an adjustment was made based on revenue. Councilwoman Scott inquired whether the $2 million was covered from the extra funds given by the State. City Manager Rohlf stated no, an additional amount of $8.7 million received from the State. Councilwoman Scott questioned the amount in funds for FY 2018. Ms. Cipriano responded it was a $6.1 million, then it was amended for $7.3 million, and $8.7 million FY 2019. It was $16 million in 2 years and thanked the General Assembly for the funding.

Ms. Cipriano stated a majority of the City’s operating costs were in salaries and fringe benefits. For FY 2020, all departments were asked to review position allotments and functions to identify adequate staffing levels for existing services. There would be a net decrease of one position in the General Fund. The three major position changes were made to Public Safety, Community Revitalization, and Community Maintenance. NNPS was at 24%, all other cost to include vehicle replacements and 17 replacements, at approximately $2 million each. She indicated Community Support totaled approximately $12 million. The City’s obligation from deb equaled $37.5 million. (see information on page 27 of the presentation attached to these minutes).

Ms. Cipriano stated there was a program (Community Paramedicine) with the Fire Department that recognized routine calls for certain addresses and citizens who used Emergency Management System (EMS) for primary services. Citizens would use the local hospitals for individuals that did not have primary care physicians. By working with health care professionals, that provided safety net services, the City’s public health and fire departments would look for positions to redirect citizens for better service deliver through primary care organizations rather than using EMS for health care services.

Ms. Cipriano reminded Council that a grant writer was a major topic of discussion the Financial Workshop in October 2018. Councilwoman Cherry inquired whether a grant writer was used for the entire City. City Manager Rohlf shared the positions would be housed in the Department of Finance. Most departments would like to have a Grant Specialist, but the City would like to take the opportunity to see what was available in the grant funding. The available grants would cover the cost of the position. Councilwoman Cherry inquired whether the City had a grant writer. City Manager Rohlf responded, there was not one individual person available but there were services, organizations, and other departments that would share information with City Manager and various departments. Every opportunity was taken advantage to identify available grants. Councilwoman Cherry suggested the City be more efficient with obtaining grants. If there were multiple resources looking at multiple grants, something would get missed. City Manager
Rohlf advised some of the grants were strictly competitive. Councilwoman Cherry questioned if she inquired about a particular grant, but staff was working on a different grant, what would happen based on the work available. City Manager responded each department has a Budget Analysis that supported each department’s budget discussions. Councilwoman Cherry questioned, the skills level required for a grant writer. Ms. Cipriano replied there was nothing worse than to loose free funds. City Manager Rohlf replied there were individuals in the Finance Department with expertise for a grant writer.

Councilwoman Woodbury indicated there were experts who were qualified in grant writing. The City would be very lucky to have talented individuals with prior experience in grant writing. Councilwoman Scott shared even though an individual may be experienced in grant writing, supporting information and data were required from Finance and Budget.

Other Funds

Ms. Cipriano reported the Other Local Funding for Schools were comprised of: (see information on page 35 of the presentation attached to these minutes).

Ms. Cipriano advised of an operating increased in Stormwater of $870,000 or 3.9% from the FY 2019.

- Impact of Federal and State Stormwater Regulations
- Two (2) Major Components
  - MS4-Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
  - TMDL-Total Maximum Daily Load: Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
- Increase for salary adjustment and expanded debt to meet regulations along with baseline budget adjustments based on current and historical trends

Ms. Cipriano advised that Waterworks would not propose a rate increase and had experienced an operating increase of $2 million or a 2.1% increase for FY 2019. Solid Waste had experienced an operating increase of $131,000, or 0.9% increase for FY 2019. Wastewater has no operation changes. She advised there was a proposed rate increase of $.25 cents per month, per ERU, which equated to a $3.00 change per year. Every household was assigned one (1) Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) totaled $1,777 square feet. Only one increase of $3.00 per year.

Next Steps

Ms. Cipriano shared the next steps for the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget was to include the adoption of the Public Hearing Schedule by City Council. She provided
a copy of the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget and the City Manager’s Transmittal Letter to members of City Council. The Budget Position Papers was distributed March 26, 2019; printed copies would be available at each public library and in the Budget & Evaluation Department. The budget was available on the City’s website at http://www.nnva.gov. She asked members of City Council to contact the Department of Budget and Evaluation, at 757-926-8733, should they have questions and/or concerns about the budget. She requested a motion that the Newport News City Council hold a Public Hearing on the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget, on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, at 7:00 p.m., in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 2400 Washington Avenue, and on Thursday, April 11, 2019, at 7:00 p.m., at the Denbigh Community Center, Room 113, 15198 Warwick Boulevard, Newport News.

Councilwoman Cherry questioned what was the dollar amount in the State funds for the schools. Ms. Cipriano replied $7.3 million was received in the FY 2019 in additional state funds and the Proposed General Assembly of $8.7 million. She advised the funds amount could not be changed, the City would recognized the General Assembly Recommended amount of $8.7 million. Councilwoman Cherry questioned whether this was the Governor’s Budget. City Manager Rohlf confirmed it was reduced to $8.7 million.

City Manager Rohlf shared she communicated with Newport News School Board Superintendent, Dr. George Parker, on ways to work together with City Council to address the operating needs and additional support in Capital Funds for the schools.

Mayor Price requested that Ms. Cipriano explain the trends in BPOL taxes. Ms. Cipriano shared that BPOL’s were made up of wholesalers, retailers, and contractors The Business, Professional and Occupational License (BPOL) tax that had been a bane for all Virginia business. The tax are imposed on a company's gross receipts in a locality, without any adjustment for the business's income or the deductible expenses incurred by the business. Ms. Cipriano shared she looked at the BPOL receipts, and as of today, the professionals that had exceeded the estimate for the FY 2019 in the retailers and wholesalers, advised it’s lacking. Her concern was the lack of connection between the retail sales amount and retailers.

Mayor Price requested for a motion in support of the FY 2020 Recommended Operating Budget Public Hearing Schedule. Councilwoman Cherry moved, pursuant to Section 6.09 of the City Charter, that the Newport News City Council hold two (2) public hearings on the FY 2020 City Operating Budget. The first such public hearing on the FY 2020 Operating Budget would be held on Tuesday, April 9, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 2400 Washington Avenue, Newport News. The second such Public Hearing on the FY 2020 City Operating Budget would be held on Thursday, April 11, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 113 of the Denbigh Community Center, 15198 Warwick Boulevard, Newport News, Virginia. In addition, a
notice informing the public of the time and place of these public hearings shall be published not less than seven days prior to the date of the first public hearing; seconded by Vice Mayor Vick.

Vote on Roll Call:
Ayes: Cherry, Harris, Jenkins, Price, Scott, Vick, Woodbury
Nays: None

III. Comments / Ideas / Suggestions

Councilwoman Woodbury advised that she had received a great deal of feedback since the discussion about having meetings in other parts of the City, and suggested arranging the second Budget Hearing for later in the month of April, possibly in the North, and combining it with a Council meeting. City Manager Rohlf questioned whether Councilwoman Woodbury was suggesting the Budget Hearing meeting be held on April 23, 2019, rather than April 11, 2019, as City Council had approved. Councilwoman Woodbury replied yes. City Manager Rohlf indicated that would have to be addressed by City Council. Councilwoman Woodbury inquired whether it was a possibility. City Attorney Owens indicated the previous motion would need to be rescinded, which adopted the Budget Public Hearing Schedule to included April 9, 2019 and April 11, 2019, and a substitute motion offered to change the dates. Councilwoman Cherry questioned whether Councilwoman Woodbury suggested having a Budget Public Hearing on April 11, 2019 and April 23, 2019. Councilwoman Woodbury responded no, she was attempting to figure out a way to have a regular meeting, as well as a Budget Public Hearing on the Budget, in the North District, and possibly combine it with the Regular Meeting of City Council, as was scheduled on April 9, 2019.

City Manager Rohlf responded, based on Councilwoman Woodbury’s suggestion to hold meetings in other locations, that staff was working to get the cost to hold meetings in different locations throughout the City. She advised that part of the issue was technology, not the ability to record and show the meeting, but rather broadcasting the meetings live. Staff was trying to determine what type of logistics would need to be addressed to be able to do a live broadcast. Preliminary conversations with the Department of Communications indicated there was a need to purchase additional equipment, and she did not know whether everything could be in place to broadcast the meeting live. Councilwoman Woodbury reminded that a live broadcast was usually done for the Budget Public Hearing, which would allow both another Regular Meeting of City Council as well as a Budget Public Hearing in the North District. City Manager Rohlf advised that a mini control room would need to be set up and a lot was involved. Councilwoman Woodbury advised that the City could save by doing it for both.

City Attorney Owens indicated The City’s Budget was usually adopted at the first meeting in May. City Manager Rohlf advised that the NNPS Budget needed be adopted by May 14, 2019. She added if the City’s budget was not adopted by the end of June, 2019, the City Manager’s Recommended Budget would go into effect.
Councilman Harris inquired about the cost to hold Council Meetings at alternate locations throughout the City. City Manager Rohlf reiterated that staff was working on obtaining the cost as soon as possible. A mini-control room would need to be set-up, which could be done, but would mean purchasing additional equipment. Set-up would take a great deal of time to hold meetings at different sites, and staff wanted to be as efficient as possible, relating to the technical work that would be required.

Councilwoman Woodbury reminded that setting up the City Council meetings was a routine. City Manager agreed, but advised when required on a regular basis. Councilwoman Woodbury interjected that she was only talking about one meeting. Mayor Price advised, with no support for Councilwoman Woodbury’s suggestion, the matter would be discussed at a later time. Councilwoman Scott advised that she was not opposed to Councilwoman Woodbury’s suggestion, and saw the value in it, but there would be a great deal required technically to prepare for another Combined Regular Meeting/Budget Public Hearing.

Councilman Jenkins shared that he thought Council Meetings should be held in other areas of the City, supporting Councilwoman Woodbury’s suggestion at the March 12, 2019 Council Work Session, but felt that pushing the Budget Public Hearing back to April 23, 2019 would not allow sufficient time to consider the budget.

Councilwoman Cherry advised that she was aware of work being done at the MLK Plaza, and the site looked good as a result, but asked City Manager Rohlf to have the stone power washed. City Manager advised that she would have the matter looked into.

Councilwoman Cherry requested a staff report on HRT regarding Bus Rapid Transit.

Councilwoman Cherry requested a report on the status of her e-mail request from a constituent regarding the 27th Street Bridge, where her husband was killed. City Manager Rohlf advised that Mr. David Freeman, Assistant to the City Manager had extensive conversations with the citizen, as well as with the Newport News Police Department. A status report would be provided.

Councilwoman Cherry requested a status report regarding the feasibility of looking at the airplane tax rate decrease, and whether it was a positive. It was promised that the action would result in the City receiving more airplanes coming in. City Manager Rohlf indicated a report would be provided.

Councilwoman Cherry requests a status report on the para-medicine situation.

Councilwoman Scott recalled discussions in years past regarding whether citizens were allowed to park on their grass. She inquired about the matter as she had received numerous
calls from citizens regarding the neighbors parking on their lawns. City Attorney Owens responded that parking on lawns was only illegal in the historic districts, but citizens can park on their lawns in other districts, as it was not illegal. Councilwoman Scott questioned whether the issue could be revisited to determine whether anything could be done about the situation. She could only imagine if a neighbor parked 4-5 cars on their lawn.

Councilwoman Scott inquired about the legality of parking Recreational Vehicles (RVs) in cul-de-sacs, as she had received complaints regarding the matter. She knew it was against code to park RVs in cul-de-sacs, which became an issue at her North District Town Hall Meeting on Monday, March 25, 2019.

Councilwoman Scott raised the issue about mold, which was a topic of discussion when she was in Washington, D.C., attending the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional City Conference, held March 10-14, 2019, advocating for funds for Newport News. She was told there was a Code related to mold in the State of Virginia, but the City would be required to adopt a regulation. Mold was a big issue during the meeting with her colleagues from Virginia at the Conference. City Attorney Owens advised that he would look into the matter.

Councilwoman Scott indicated that she was honored to have representatives from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) who unexpectedly stopped by her North District Town Hall Meeting held on Monday, March 25, 2019, 7:00 p.m., at the Denbigh Community Center (15198 Warwick Boulevard). They addressed the new Denbigh Boulevard Bridge Replacement project that would affect numerous citizens. The project would replace the structurally-deficient Denbigh Boulevard Bridge over Interstate 64 and the CSX Railway between Warwick Boulevard and Jefferson Avenue with a new bridge that met geometric and design standards. Information regarding detours, and the length of the project would be disseminated to the public soon. The project would cause a slight inconvenience, but would be impactful to help alleviate traffic congestion in the Denbigh area, along with the Denbigh Boulevard Interchange Justification Review (IJR) Project to construct ramps (interchange) off of Denbigh Boulevard. She questioned what was being done to prepare citizens in the North District about this major project. City Manager Rohlf advised that a report would be provided to Council about how this project would be approached, and any plans that would be put in place regarding the project. Councilwoman Scott stated the first phase was to be complete by 2010, and she hoped by that time Atkinson Boulevard would be open to provide some relief.

City Manager Rohlf advised that City Council would be asked to adopt a resolution at the Regular Meeting associated with the project. The resolution authorized and directed the City Manager to execute the Urban Project Construction Agreement by and between the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the City of Newport News, Virginia (City) for the Denbigh Boulevard Interchange Justification Review (IJR). VDOT would conduct a review of locations for a new I-64 interchange between Fort Eustis Boulevard
and Jefferson Avenue. The report would inform and assist the City, VDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in determining the feasibility and viability of approving and constructing a new interchange. VDOT required the City to execute a Project Administration Agreement and participate in a 50/50 cost share. The City match of $225,000 was available appropriated Streets and Bridges funding. It was a good news piece, and a better alternative. City Manager Rohlf commended the City’s Department of Engineering, who had the foresight to speak with VDOT in the bridge design.

Councilwoman Woodbury announced there would be a presentation about the bus rapid transit (BRT) project, at a meeting of the HRT New Starts Committee on Thursday, March 28, 2019, 12:00 noon, at HRT (3400 Victoria Boulevard, Hampton).

Councilwoman Woodbury advised that HRT wanted to keep the excess from the jurisdictions, over what was used, for a reserve, rather than returning it to the City. She advised that she did not favor that suggestion. The issue would be raised again by HRT.

Councilwoman Woodbury questioned who should speak with regarding graffiti. She advised there was a store in the Hidenwood Shopping Center. City Manager Rohlf replied that Councilmembers could contact the City Manager’s Office to advise of the problem at anytime.

Councilwoman Scott advised there was graffiti on a building facing “The Love Shack” in the Denbigh community on Warwick Boulevard. Councilwoman Woodbury advised that a citizen had contacted her about that building may become a “porn” shop.

Vice Mayor Vick thanked Assistant City Manager, Alan Archer, and his team regarding the Four Oaks Day Service Center. She had receive numerous comments from citizens who had used the Center, e.g. citizens were able to get information to obtain their birth certificates, and similar information. She commended Volunteers of America for being such a good organization. She shared a situation she experienced, on a Sunday, when citizens had missed transportation, but Ms. Tameka Davis, Executive Director at Four Oaks happened to be on call, and picked the individuals up and transported them to the Center. Other jurisdictions were commenting on how well Newport News had done with the Four Oaks Day Service Center.

Councilwoman Woodbury suggested getting notice out to get the word to churches about the Center. Oftentimes, people go to churches to receive assistance, and were not aware that the Day Service Center was available.

Assistant City Manager Archer advised that the City’s Department of Communications was working with Ms. Davis on a Communications Plan to get the word out in the community. There was also discussion about creating an Advisory Board, which would allow for greater community participation. He promised to follow-up.
Vice Mayor Vick indicated there had been a great deal of positive feedback related to the Center.

Councilwoman Scott inquired whether people from other jurisdictions could use the Center. Her sister-in-law works for a neighboring county, attended the Grand Opening of Four Oaks, and was very impressed with the Center and the services offered. City Manager Rohlf advised that people would not be turned away. Assistant City Manager Archer had heard that the Center had sparked discussion in other communities. Some communities had turned away from the problem of homelessness, but the City of Newport News stepped up to address the issue. The Center had a mechanism to track who used the facility, most were in the Hampton Roads Region, with the predominant number being Newport News-based. At some point he hoped it grew into a funding question to ask for other resources and help to get the proper support, and other communities may want to have a greater role fiscally. Councilwoman Scott advised that her sister-in-law would have further conversation with her jurisdiction about possibly becoming a partner.

Councilwoman Woodbury suggested distributing a list of available resources to those homeless individuals that stood on corners, with one card directing them to the Four Oaks Day Services Center, rather than providing money or a meal.

City Manager Rohlf advised that the Department of Communications was working to get information to hold City Council meetings in other locations in the City, as well as looking for a central location. Once received, she would bring it back to City Council as a full report. Councilwoman Woodbury recalled, in years past, that City Council held a meeting in the James Room. City Manager Rohlf advised that staff was looking into that possibility. City Manager Rohlf advised that the meeting was recorded, not broadcast.

Mayor Price invited Venerria Thomas, Director, Newport News Department of Human Services, to provide a brief synopsis on the Town Hall Meeting, hosted by the Virginia Department of Social Services and the Federation of Virginia Foodbanks, on Monday, March 25, 2019, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., at the Brittingham-Midtown Community Center (570 McLawhorne Drive) to talk about poverty in the City and what was being done to combat that. Mayor Price advised that he was impressed with the amount of services being rendered to the less fortunate.

Ms. Thomas advised the Forum discussed homelessness and hunger in Hampton Roads. There were several panelists on hand for the discussion. The Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services, Mr. Duke Storen, was present, as was the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Ms. Bettina Ring, to facilitate the discussion. Ms. Thomas was one of five panelists to talk about what occurred in the community related to hunger and other issues experienced by the low income in Hampton Roads. She focused on statistics and issues in Newport News. Staff from Hampton Roads Community Action Program was also a member of the panel, as was Ms. Karen Joyner, of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks, and a gentleman from NASA
who grew up and experienced child abuse, deliberately kept hungry by his family, eventually winding up in the Foster Care system. He served as a member of the Board of Directors at the local Foodbank Federation, and a Foodbank operator. She advised that Forums that created a plan to end hunger were also planned for Arlington, Roanoke, Danville, Fairfax, Norfolk, as well as Richmond, Virginia.

City Manager Rohlf mentioned the Poverty Simulation with the Newport News Police Department (NNPD) on Monday, March 25, 2019, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., at the Brittingham-Midtown Community Center (570 McLawhorne Drive). The simulation was impactful and an eye-opening experience to the challenges and barriers that those who live in poverty face on a day-to-day basis. A number of departments went through the simulation, which provided an opportunity to collaborate and get a sense of what other departments did, and how to better provide support by understanding the community needs.

Vice Mayor Vick indicated, in looking at the City’s summer employment program, and looking at families that barely get by, it was important for children to get a job and be able to receive and provide income. The work ethic created and received, as well as the immediate data received could not be replaced. Ms. Thomas advised that she was a witness too. The issue was also discussed at the forum on Monday night and some of the children able to earn income, contributed to their family, even those in the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). She advised that Newport News had the second largest SNAP program in Hampton Roads, at 42,000 participants, second only to Norfolk.

Vice Mayor Vick advised that some did not have access to opportunities that others had, such as job opportunities, being able to connect with jobs. When being able to invest in human capital, it would equate to more taxes, and less crime, and would lead to building a better community.

Ms. Thomas indicated that was the topic of discussion at the Simulation, and how institutions often did not allow low-income to access the type of benefits that were needed to pull themselves out of poverty. Vice Mayor Vick extended thanks to Ms. Thomas for all she added as Director of Human Services, and her vision for how the City viewed the most vulnerable.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS
ON MOTION, COUNCIL ADJOURNED 6:03 P.M.
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Minutes of Work Session
March 26, 2019

Indiana A. Brown
Deputy City Clerk

McKinley L. Price
Mayor
Presiding Officer

A true copy, teste:

City Clerk