

The work session meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

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

Absent:

Present from City Council Administration:

City Manager John March Altman, Jr.
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
Acting City Clerk Tangi R. Hill

2. PRAYER:

Vice Mayor Hill led the Council meeting in prayer.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

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

4. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:

A quorum was present.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Coretha Claiborn, 35 S. Market Street, is the owner of Claiborn and Associates, Incorporated. Ms. Claiborn is the Director of the Alamo Recovery Center in Petersburg. The Alamo is a small nonprofit that provides hope and healing support for those struggling with addiction through structured counseling, life skills development, transitional housing, and community awareness. The Alamo was established in 1971 and targets primarily the Tri-Cities region. It is the only transitional recovery house serving this region. She described the admission process and the free services provided. Residents are required to obtain employment, pay a modest rent, and participate in daily therapeutic support groups. Ms. Claiborn noted that they typically serve 100 to 150 individuals each its support for the last 13 years. The Alamo owns and occupies two pre-Civil War era two story houses. Ms. Claiborn shared with Council the repairs that have been made to the homes and those that are still needed to the exterior. She informed the Council that they have applied for the Community Development Block Grant to complete the renovations. She desired to increase collaboration with the City and other local agencies. She is expressed her desire to participate in conversations with the Governors partnership for Petersburg and related to the regional and local opioids abatement. She thanked Council Member Myers for his support.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, addressed the Council regarding the budget amendment that was approved under Old Business at the Council's previous meeting. She expressed confusion about the Southside Virginia Emergency Crew "SVEC" budget allocation for \$300,000 and an additional \$350,000, and Council just appropriated \$650,000. She mentioned that Mr. Altman stated that a

contract had just been signed around the time of the meeting on February 20th, but shortly thereafter an article was published in *Progress Index* stating that Southside Virginia Emergency Crew hiring more staff because of Petersburg giving them more money. She stated that this indicates to her that the SVEC knew that the money was coming before Council knew about it and obviously a long time before it was appropriated. Ms. Rudolph stated that we're now in the month of April and questioned the audit. She commented to why we're concerned about having another month of time for people to find out about this if the public can't comment on it. She added that the public could not do it at the March meeting because we did not have proper notification. She asked what was the notification for if the people are not given an opportunity to speak. She spoke regarding having less than 3 months to pass the FY2025 budget. She expressed her desire that the public will have the opportunity to speak on it. She also noted that the City does not have a CAFR for this fiscal year. She added that the last time it was mentioned was December of 2023. At that time, the public was told that information was going to be given to the auditors and the public has not heard any more about that. She commented that again, something that's overdue. Ms. Rudolph noted that on the agenda for the next meeting is the real estate tax rate. She commented that it is a whole interesting thing, but she is glad it is going to be talked about because what is being proposed will be of great interest to the citizens. She stated that she is hoping that the Council is still going to have a meeting to allow for public comment regarding the STARS Project with VDOT. She added that the Don-A-Matrix Gala is a good event, but feels that Council needs to buckle down and put in some extra time working on a budget and some of the basic things needed to run the City.

Pat Hines, 1227 Hamilton Street, spoke regarding the homeless issues in the City of Petersburg. She introduced Mr. Johnson, who was in a homeless shelter last year and lost custody of this daughters as a result of it. She was able to get him in transitional housing and gave him an apartment. He now has regained custody of his daughters. She requested that Council make it a priority to allocate funding in the upcoming budget to address homelessness.

David Mueller, 1855 Arch Street, spoke regarding his 10-year old son, who is in the fourth grade, being assaulted by his substitute teacher at Walnut Hill Elementary School. He described what happened to his son as explained to him by the principal. He requested that the substitute teacher be arrested. However, he was told that there was nothing that could be done by the magistrate because the stories conflicted as a result of the principal's report. Mr. Mueller stated that he called Council Member Marlow Jones and Police Chief Christian, within a day he was instructed to come to the police station with his son. Within two days, the police department arrested the substitute teacher and charged him with assault and battery. The substitute teacher pleaded guilty to both charges. Mr. Mueller stated that the issue was the principal's refusal to call the police and that the substitute teacher had no teaching degree nor substitute credentials at all. He was hired as a security guard to walk the halls. Mr. Mueller stated that he has received other reports that this man was hitting other kids and the principal is doing nothing about it. He thanked Council Member Marlow Jones and Police Chief Christian.

Jeffrey Fleming, 1819 Chuchatuck Avenue, stated that the City has some good employees. Mr. Fleming mentioned that he is an employee of the City. He reported that two weeks ago, he received a call from one of his neighbors about a house that was being renovated. The owner of the house poured fuel oil into the grass along the City's right of way. Mr. Fleming contacted Mr. Jim Reid, who connected him with Mr. Chris Lawson. Mr. Lawson enforced what was needed to remedy the situation. Mr. Fleming stated that the City needs more employees like him and wanted to thank him for a job well done.

Jocelyn Toppin, 605 and 611 S. Sycamore Street, spoke regarding real estate tax rates in Petersburg. She provided a comparison of the taxes paid for her properties compared to what she pays for real estate taxes in Louisa County. She also spoke of her nonprofit organization to teach entrepreneurship. She also expressed her desire to help the homeless get cars, jobs, and adequate housing.

Jasmine McDonald requested to speak. Mayor Parham allowed her to do so.

Jasmine McDonald, 19 Jarrett Court, spoke regarding her home being without water for 30 days. She resides in housing managed by the Petersburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority. She asked why does she need legal aid or a judge to make a ruling to have her water restored. She noted that it is illegal for her water to be off and her children to be without water. She requested assistance having her water restored and/or relocating to a better environment. Council Member Smith-Lee informed Ms. McDonald that she has made attempts twice to contact her. Council Member Smith-Lee stated that she would contact her again and requested Ms. McDonald's email address.

Hearing no one else, Mayor Parham concluded the public comment period.

Council Member Smith-Lee left the dais at 6:37 p.m.

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

- a. Minutes of the March 19, 2024 – Regular Meeting Minutes
- b. Minutes of the March 19, 2024 – Closed Session City Council Meeting Minutes
- c. Minutes of the March 27, 2024 – Special Meeting Closed Session Minutes
- d. Schedule a Public Hearing for the Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend and Readopt Section 2-108 of the Petersburg City Code Pertaining to Responsibilities of the Clerk with Respect to Published Ordinances – (First Reading)
- e. Schedule a Public Hearing and Consideration of an Ordinance Requested by the City Council to Amend and Readopt Article 24 Nonconforming Uses and Article 25 Supplementary Height, Area, and Bulk Regulations, as Set Forth in the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg, to Allow the Rehabilitation and Continuation of Noncomplying Structures as Defined and to Clarify the Allowance of Single-Family Dwellings and Accessory Improvements on Non-Conforming Lots Recorded Prior to Adoption of the Zoning Ordinance (First Reading)
- f. Schedule a Public Hearing to Amend Chapter 106, Taxation, Article III, Real Estate, Division 3, Exemption for Elderly and Disabled (First Reading)
- g. Consideration of a Resolution to Amend and Readopt the City of Petersburg's Purchasing/Procurement Manual – (Removed from the Consent Agenda)
- h. Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Adopt the Real Property Tax Rate (First Reading)

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the consent agenda, with the exception of Item g, Consideration of a Resolution to Amend and Readopt the City of Petersburg's Purchasing//Procurement Manual to be considered at the April 16, 2024 City Council meeting. Council Member Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call of 7-0-0. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; voting no: none; abstaining: none; absent: Smith-Lee.

Council Member Smith Lee returned at 6:40 p.m.

7. SPECIAL REPORTS:

- a. Discussion of the Draft Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Modifications Based on Council Feedback and Request

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, provided City Council with an overview of the Draft Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Modifications that was based on Council's feedback and request.

Key Notes:

- A joint meeting with the Planning Commission and City Council was held on February 27, 2024.
- Council requested that staff look at some potential areas to add additional industrial use on the future land use map.

- Additional industrial use was added near Squirrel Level Road; however, the single-family homes remained as recommended.
- Modifications were made near Rives Road, where roadway improvements are also being proposed, could be impacted by some additional infrastructure is being proposed.
- Council will take action to adopt the Comprehensive Plan on May 21, 2024. At that time, Council will make a motion to adopt to include these requested changes.

Discussion was held between the City Council and staff.

Council directed staff to provide them with the number of additional industrial acres supported in the City via modifications to the Future Land Use Map as Squirrel Level Road and Rives Road. Staff will email this information to Council.

b. Discussion on the Safe Streets and Roads for All Planning Grant

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, provided City Council with an overview of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Planning Grant (SS4A). This discretionary program was established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over 5 years, 2022-2026. The program funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grant to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. Over \$3 billion is still available for future funding rounds.

The City of Petersburg is eligible to submit for the creation of a Safety Action Plan. The Action Plans are comprehensive safety plans aimed at reducing and eliminating serious-injury and fatal crashes affecting all roadway users. Action Plans use data analysis to characterize roadway safety problems and strengthen a community's approach through project and strategies that address the most significant risks.

Key Notes:

- Safe Streets and Roads for All also offers implementation funds, but to be eligible, plans need to be completed by April 30, 2024, which is not feasible for staff.
- Even though the City will not be eligible to receive implementation funds, the City will still come out with a plan prioritizing projects to address safety concerns. With cost estimates and planning level designs, the City would be eligible for other funding opportunities, such as Safe Routes to School, Transportation Alternatives, Highway Safety Improvement Program, etc.
- Petersburg Statistics: 22 Fatalities in 2017-2021; 5 Pedestrian Fatalities in 2017-2021, with 4 in 2019; 7 Fatalities in 2022, with 1 Pedestrian and 1 Bicyclist; 4 Fatalities in 2023; 2017-2021 Serious Injuries Per Year 53.6; 2022-2023 Serious Injuries Per Year 56.5
- Based on early conversations, cost is likely about \$200,000-\$250,000 for a Safety Action Plan with \$40,000 - \$50,000 coming from the City (20% match required).

Discussion between the City Council and staff was held.

Council Member Jones asked City Manager Altman to address the sinkhole at the Petersburg High School. City Manager Altman informed Council that will coordinate with the school system regarding this matter.

c. Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled

Brittany Flowers, Commissioner of Revenue, provided City Council with an overview of the Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled. The implementation of the tax relief for the elderly and disabled will improve the increase of the gross income and assets from the current City Codes §206-109 and §106-112.

Key Notes:

- §106-109 General Prerequisites to Grant – The exemption provided for in this division shall be granted to persons subject to the following provisions:
 - The title to the property for which the exemption is claimed is held, or partially held, on July 1 of the taxable year, by the person claiming the exemption.
 - That the head of household occupying the dwelling and owning the title, or partial title, thereto is 65 years or older, or is permanently and totally disabled, on June 30 of the year immediately preceding the taxable year.
 - That the gross combined income of the owner during the year immediately preceding the taxable year shall be determined by the Commissioner of Revenue to be in an amount not to exceed \$35,000.00. The gross combined income shall include all income from all sources of the owner and of the owner's relatives living in the dwelling for which exemption is claimed; except that the first \$4,000.00 of income of each relative, other than the spouse of the owner, who is living in the dwelling, shall not be included in such total.
 - That the total combined financial worth of the owner and of the spouse of the owner, as of May 1 of the year immediately preceding the taxable year, shall be determined by the Commissioner of the Revenue to be in an amount not to exceed \$70,000.00. The total financial worth shall include the value of all assets, including the equitable interest, of the owner and the owner's relatives living in the dwelling for which the exemption is claimed but shall not include the fair market value of the dwelling and the land upon which it is situated, not exceeding one acre, for which the exemption is claimed.
- §106-112 – Amount of Exemption. The exemption provided for in this division shall be granted to persons subject to the following provisions:
 - The person qualifying for and claiming exemption under the division shall be relieved of 100 percent of the real estate tax levied on the qualifying dwelling and land if the combined household income of the owner is \$0 - \$25,000.00 with a maximum tax relief of \$1,200.00. The person qualifying for and claiming exemption under this division shall be relieved of 50 percent of the real estate tax levied on the qualifying dwelling and land if the combined household income of the owner is \$25,001.00 - \$35,000.00 with a maximum tax relief of \$1,200.00.
- Applications
 - 2022 – 358 Applications Mailed – 19 Applications Denied Due to Being Over Income
 - 2023 – 463 Applications Mailed – 3 Applications Denied due to Assets > 70,000 – 20 Applications Denied Due to Being Over Income
 - 2024 – 566 Applications Set to be Mailed

Discussion between the City Council and staff was held.

8. **MONTHLY REPORTS:**

Presentation and Update from JMT on Poor Creek

Ben Anderson, JMT, presented the Southeast Petersburg Infrastructure Improvement Program review and update.

Key Notes:

- The EPA Grant was approved for \$2.4 million, which goes directly to the Poor Creek Pumping Station
- \$900,000 Community Funded Grant from Congress for the Force Main Project
- Submitting a grant for \$8 million through ED. Waiting to hear back from the Congress and the Senate for \$4 million funding for the same project.
- Completed the activities for the Elevated Water Tank at Wagner Road.
- Kick-off meeting is Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.

- Landmark Construction Company of Texas is doing the construction of the Water Storage Tank. Projected completion is early Summer 2025.
- Water Main Project bid was awarded and notice of award was posted.
- Wastewater Project is out for bid. Schedule to be completed in the Fall 2025.
- The Water Tank will include the City logo and logos of area industries.

Discussion was held between the City Council, staff, and consultants.

9. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT:

There were no items for this portion of the agenda.

10. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE:

There were no items for this portion of the agenda.

11. UTILITIES:

Public Works Monthly Report

Jerry Byerly, Director of Public Works, provided City Council with the Public Works & Utilities Monthly Report. A status update was provided for work orders and projects.

Discussion between the City Council and staff was held.

Citywide Drainage Study Update

Consultants from the Timmons Group, provided City Council with an overview of the Petersburg Citywide Drainage Study Update. The Timmons Group is leading the project, but supported by RK&K, James River Association, Precision Measurements, Inc., and H&B Surveying & Mapping, LLC. This update included the Culvert Replacement Project on North Park Drive, the Southwest Improvement Project on Walnut Boulevard, and the Bioretention Area on Canal Street. The study is needed because when it rains, some areas of Petersburg experience localized flooding.

Key Notes:

- Petersburg was awarded a \$2.2 million grant from the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund to facilitate the study.
- Study began in 2023 and will continue through 2024.
- The data collected will be used by the City's Stormwater Management Program to improve drainage and reduce localized flooding.
- The Project Approach consists of master planning, asset mapping, community outreach, watershed modeling, and neighborhood drainage studies.
- The projected schedule for Brickhouse Run & Lieutenant Run Watersheds
 - Spring 2024 – Neighborhood Prioritization and Modeling Begins
 - Summer 2024 – Project Identification and Project Prioritization
 - Fall 2024 – Conceptual Design and Grant Applications
- The projected schedule for Remaining Watersheds
 - Winter 2024 - Citywide Asset Mapping Delivery and Modeling Begins
 - Spring 2025 – Project Identification and Project Prioritization
 - Summer 2025 – Conceptual Design and Grant Applications

Discussion between the City Council and staff was held.

12. STREETS:

This report was provided under the Public Works & Utilities Monthly Report.

13. FACILITIES:

This report was provided under the Public Works & Utilities Monthly Report.

14. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

a. Final Report for Upcoming Armed Forces Day

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, presented the Petersburg Armed Forces Day scheduled for May 18, 2024. The event is hosted by the City of Petersburg. Armed Forces Day is a day to pay tribute to the men and women who serve in the United States' Armed Forces. Armed Forces Day is also a part of Armed Forces Week, which begins on the second Saturday of May.

Key Notes:

- The event areas are:
- Bank/Old Street Event Zone (Sycamore Street to Market Street)
 - Opening Ceremonies at the Siege Museum
 - National Guard Rock Climbing Wall
 - US Army Virtual Reality Tractor Trailer
 - EOD Equipment Display
 - Military Vehicles
 - Goodyear Blimp Flyover
 - Historic "Poker Walk Contest" through the Downtown
 - USMC Pullup Contest
 - Recruiters from All Service Branches
 - Autograph Opportunities with NFL Players
 - Pictures with Miss America
- Sycamore Street Event Zone (Bollingbrook Down to Old Street)
 - Military Exhibits
 - Outdoor Café Seating
- Rock Street Event Zone (Between PAAL and the Crocker Spot)
 - PAAL Park will be Open for Picnics
 - Outdoor Art Exhibit and Vendors
 - Children's Hands-On Art Opportunities
- Trapezium Harbor Park Stage Event Zone
 - Trapezium Harbor Park Stage will be the debut of the first national musical act playing at the harbor. Goal is to have 10,000 fans in Petersburg enjoying the music, festivities, shopping, and the best restaurants in the region.
- Amphibious Landing Zone
 - An Amphibious Landing Force conducting an exercise to deploy on the western side of the island (former Richard's Wine Cellar, Inc. site)

Discussion was held between the City Council and staff.

Mayor Parham reported on the upcoming weekend events and summer internship program. Vice Mayor Hill announced his upcoming Ward meeting.

15. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA

City Manager Altman thanked Mayor Parham for announcing the Summer Employment Program.

Council Member Jones asked City Manager Altman about lights being installed on Scotts Street and Old Wagner Road. He stated that the lights were never installed with the new construction. He also asked if City Manager Altman to look at 652 Warner Road was never put back after the new pole was put up. He also asked the status of the smoke detectors.

16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK:

Acting City Clerk Tangi Hill informed Council and the public of how to access the City Council meeting agendas on the City's website. She also informed the Public that email copies of the agenda can be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office.

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:

City Attorney Williams commended the Acting City Clerk on her report.

18. ADJOURNMENT:

The City Council adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Adopted the 16th day of April, 2024.


Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:


Mayor