

The work session meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:52 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

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

Absent: None

Present from City Council Administration:

City Manager John March Altman, Jr.
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams

2. PRAYER:

Mayor Parham stated, "Vice Mayor Hill will lead us in our opening 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 is present.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "I am here to talk about the big check to the Petersburg Library Foundation. But where do I start? How about why do your councilors allow Mayor Parham to make unilateral decisions about spending our money when his vote counts any more than yours? What a minute, there never was a vote on this. Breaking your own rules where any appropriation over \$100 requires a public vote on an ordinance. And the check was only for \$355,000. That is over a third of a million. Whether this huge check was intended to ensure a superior library system with excellent facilities, quality resources, and innovative sources to enhance education on cultural opportunities to quote the Progress-Index. Or to pay off some long-standing loan belonging to the Petersburg Public Library Development Company Inc., that the city is trying to sell me. There is no urgency that requires bringing a check to a birthday party before going through the most basic procedures. Then there is the inescapable fact that this much money would help with many of Petersburg most critical needs. Things like a real community center for the youth and families and a shelter for those who lack a place to stay. But instead, you have let your priorities be screwed by one person's desire to make a big splash at a private party. To quote from the Progress-Index coverage of the presentation of the check, 'Walker was more than happy to accept the donation.' Yeah, I bet he was. I am sure you all are thick as thieves with him salivating over the next shot at a casino here, considering it is his property that you picked for this big project. The bottom line is this, you all are dysfunctional, you ignore your own rules, you will

try to cover up your failures to follow those rules, you disrespect us citizens, and the worst is that you disregard the city's most vulnerable people in favor to seeking to impress and appear important."

Pat Hines, 1227 Hamilton Street, stated, "I am here tonight representing a non-profit, Petersburg Center for Development. But I am also standing with a coalition that works with the homeless in our area. We are here because there is a problem, and we just want to bring it to your attention to let you know that there are concerned citizens out here that are working with our unsheltered and our homeless. And for those in the community who do not understand what unsheltered means, it means that they do not have a sofa to sleep on or a floor to sleep on. They are sleeping outside. They are sleeping under bridges and church porches. They are sleeping on the back of this beautiful library porch. So, with that being said, last year when I started a shelter, I had two of the council people that supported me. Ward 1, Mr. Jones, I thank you. Ward 6, Annette Smith, I thank you. But this year, along with the coalition here we are asking all of you to support the effort in our community for our people. I know what the party line is. When we had a shelter, they dumped all of their people here and it was a problem. But that was the past and things change, and people change. Why is it that Hopewell can run a shelter and Petersburg cannot? Why is it that Chesterfield has shelters and Richmond has shelters? We have to learn to do the right thing. And the right thing is for all citizens. Is it because they do not have an address or because they do not own a voter registration card that they are voiceless and unheard? We are here to speak for them tonight. And I know that I only have 54 seconds left. So, what I am asking of you is to make them a priority and put them in your budget for next year. Make accommodation and provisions for them. It is only the right thing to do. Wouldn't you all agree? I have a lot more to say but I will not take up anymore of your time. But I would like this issue to be addressed in a further meeting. Because we deserve answers on how this problem is going to be addressed. And if the city cannot do it then donate to my non-profit and we will try to get it done. Thank you."

Jasmine McDonald, 19 Jarratt Court, stated, "I am here to bring up business conduct in a lot of these establishments around here. It seems as if we have a lot of people who are being hired and playing very demonic music. For example, I took my children to the store today and one of the employees had this music playing in a Family Dollar talking about 'cutthroat' first thing in the morning while I was trying to get diapers and pull-ups for my kids. And I am tired of it now. I understand that there might be some poverty problem or literacy problems. But enough is enough. We have enough people here who are educated with their right mind. We need to get this place cleaned up. Get these people out of these establishments. I am raising children here and I am getting sick of it now. There is no reason my children should go into the store first thing in the morning hearing 'cutthroat.' And I am tired of it. And whoever runs the Family Dollar on Halifax Street, get those employees out of there today and replace them with people who have enough sense to know how to run a community establishment so that our children can be safe in these environments. And that is my concern. And I just pray that before the end of this month we see a change. And that's it. Thank you."

Genevieve Lohr, 19 Guarantee Street, stated, "First, everything Pat Hines said I think that I have said similar things in front of you. I completely agree and I thank her for all of her efforts and everyone here. So, at the last city council meeting we had a wonderful presentation from VCU with something that sounds like a great thing for our city. Now, she shared a lot of health data that I think is very important. Now it was concerning to me because after that there were some conversations happening about believing that Petersburg is the least healthy city in the State of Virginia. And it is the least healthy city in the State of Virginia. This is not made up and this is not data that is, as I heard from some, that the state is only here because people were diagnosed here. No, this data exists from where people live and not where they are diagnosed. So, this is good data, and it is very sound. We have a huge issue with children in poverty. Do you know how many children are in poverty in the City of Petersburg? It is 36%. The state average is 13%. That is almost three times. That is a lot of kids in poverty. Poverty is a big issue for our children and part of it is because it is an adverse child experience. Enough adverse child experiences means that your life expectancy decreases. But we know that is happening in Petersburg so that makes sense. So, I know my time is up, so I am going to wind it up for you. Please look at this website. There are tons of data, and it is right there, and it is not made up. It is not something from the Progress-Index. So, please do so. Thank you."

Gary Talley, 2323 Fort Rice Street, stated, "A couple of comments. I brought this up before, if I were as consistent in showing up to meetings as you all are, I would not have a job. Now we showed up here a quarter to five waiting for you all to start and an hour later you all come out here. The check still bothers me, that grandstanding check. I support the library and I have a library card and I use it all the time. But committing city funds when you do not have the authority is wrong. I want to bring up the shelter issue. A lot of people whose names you called, and they did not come up, were going to talk about the shelter. We need one here. Now we have had a very mild winter so far. But if you all have been outside in the middle of the night, it is very cold. We are the only jurisdictions around here that does not have a shelter. We have buildings and have the money. Let's do something about it. And finally, I am going to bring up this topic again and I talked to Darrin about it, the sinkhole at 20 West Bank Street. Over two years, and I finally got somewhat of an answer today that maybe it will start it in March. We had a meeting and Mr. Altman did not show up for it. I had a conflict so I could not contribute anything to that meeting except complaints about how bad it is. The last big rain that we had gotten worse. And if we have another big rain it is going to get worse again. It may be that we cannot use that building. That area is not safe to travel to right now. And it is going to get worse. Please do something about this."

David Batts, 1127 High Pearl Street, stated, "I come about the problem on Wythe Street with the last flood that I had. The city does not care about flooding. They were forewarned that it was going to happen. I talked to the city manager. I talked to everybody that would listen. They told me to wait until the grass season is over and that they will clean it out. I have pictures showing that when they tore down the hotel, they dropped trees in the creek. They would not get them out and they just left me with my building tore all the pieces. The embankment would need to be fixed. I cannot afford to fix it. You all did it and I am asking that you have enough sense to pay for what you did. The damage is done. Now I go out on South Park on the 24th of January, and they are out there putting up a retainer wall in a creek. They said that they are not doing any work and that they are doing a study on South Park. But no one knows what is going on. This is crazy. Oh, it is just certain sides of the city that you all work on. That does not make sense. If you are not going to be about what is right, then just get out of it. I mean that this is just crazy. It is stupid that I am sitting here arguing with you all about fixing something that you all did. They cut down and snipped off the tree. You want to see the pictures. The last time I did not have the pictures, but I have them now. I mean that it is crazy that I am sitting here trying to figure out how I am going to fix this problem that someone else made. Now to top it off I don't think that you all realize that you tore down the hotel and left a wall up. The wall is going to fall. We are going to look, and Washington Street is going to be Wythe Street. I want to know who is going to say something then."

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

Mayor Parham stated, "I just want to take a minute to address some of the people that are here for the homeless shelter. Since the Salvation Army Shelter closed over six years ago, we have over 150 churches here. And we have had meetings with all the churches here at various times about doing something for the homeless and the city helping to be a part of it. And no one stepped up. Council Member Marlow Jones was addressing this. He was helping and had a community center. It is all about the people coming together. Even when Councilman Jones was doing his he had a lack of support. You all keep the momentum that you all have tonight to get things started and do not fall off. Because the only time that we had this problem addressed was by First Baptist Church on Washington Street. And that was Reverend Rowe, and she was over 70 years old. And everyone said that they were going to help, and they opened up their doors to help the homeless situation in the city. And that poor lady said that she could not do it anymore and no one stepped up to help her. So, everyone in the room, when it is time to step up, I expect you to be a part of it. Do not just be here to tonight but be here every night to help this issue because we know it is an issue."

- a. Minutes:
 - January 16, 2024 – Closed Session Meeting Minutes
 - January 16, 2024 – Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

- b. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for State Aid to Public Libraries Revenue Funds in the amount of \$34,450 – 1st Reading
- c. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the donation to the Petersburg Public Library in the amount of \$19,620 – 1st Reading
- d. A public hearing and consideration of a request from Chase Gibrall, applicant, and representative for Navarrete's Auto Sales, to obtain a Special Use Permit at 2520 Deerfield Drive to operate a used car lot as provided for under Article 23, Supplementary Use Regulations – Special Uses, Section 4, Special Uses Enumerated. Item (22) of the Zoning Ordinance to establish stand-alone used vehicle sales not associated with a new-vehicle dealership or not located upon the same parcel as such new-vehicle dealership, if located upon parcels of less than one acre in area, such to be permitted within the B-2 and M-1 zoning districts only.
- e. A public hearing and consideration of a request from Grand Generation, LLC, owner D. Wyatt for a Special Use Permit pursuant to Article 23, Section 4(20) of the Zoning Ordinance to operate as a vehicle removal operator, vehicle storage lot, or vehicle tow lot, such to be permitted within the M-1 and M-2 zoning districts only. The subject property is located at 1700-1701 Midway Avenue and is zoned M-1, Light Industrial District.
- f. A public hearing and consideration of an ordinance to amend and readopt Article 3, Definitions, and Article 19, Off-Street Parking Regulations, to clarify the requirements of driveways for low-density housing at the request of the Planning Commission.
- g. Consideration to accept a donation in the amount of \$500,000 from People's Advantage Federal Credit Union - 1st Reading.
- h. A request to schedule a public hearing to amend the FY2023-2024 Budget.

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

7. SPECIAL REPORTS:

- a. Presentation and Update from the Petersburg Arts Council.

Sandy Graham, member of Petersburg Arts Council, and Kris Russell (President), provided city council with an overview.

Key Notes:

- Petersburg Arts Council was created by the city council on March 21, 2023.
 - The council is designed to make recommendations to the city council on acquisition, donation, deaccessioning, and funding of public art.
 - On September 19, 2023, the city council amended the terms of office of the eleven-member board. The council changed the name of the commission to Petersburg Arts Council from Petersburg Area Arts Council to avoid confusion of the Peterburg Area Art League.
 - They will be working with the city council in adopting rules and establishing powers of this commission.
 - They will be helping with making decisions and recommendations to the city council on public art that is sought to be donated to the city.
 - They may talk to the council about a policy for public murals.
 - They are putting together a branding kit for the Petersburg Arts Council. They are also rebranding the Friday for the Arts in the city as well.
 - They are working on a marketing campaign to revitalize the public interest for the Friday for the Arts, local businesses, and organizations as well.
- b. Update from Dr. Kai Donsbach Chief Operating Officer of the Medicines for All Institute at VCU.

Mayor Parham stated that this presentation has been moved from tonight's agenda.

c. Presentation and Update from JMT.

Michael P. Luning, Vice President of JMT, gave an update on Poor Creek.

Key Notes:

- There is a new sewage force main coming down North Crater Road. It will be larger and handle more flow.
- They are rehabbing the wastewater pumping station at Poor Creek to handle the flow as well.
- There will be a new water pumping station near Walnut Hill storage tank. There will be a new transmission main on South Crater Road that takes them to Wagner Road.
- Big project of \$40 million dollars of construction.
- Continuing bi-weekly phone calls with DEQ for water quality.
- They are waiting for a pending award.
- The city does not have to make a match grant from EPA which is worth \$600,000.
- All the environmental assessments are done. All water projects are moving through.
- The EDA grant for the water storage tank has a few paperwork issues.
- The ARPA money is already flowing from DEQ.
- Water Main and Booster has a completion of Spring/Summer 2025.
- Wastewater PS and Force Main will be completed in fall 2025.
- Projects are on schedule a year early for 2025.

There was a discussion between the city council and Mr. Luning.

Joanne Williams, Director of Communication, Tourism, Marketing, and Government Relations, stated, "We are applying for a Tech Hub grant, which relates and is for Poor Creek. And we are wrapping that up. It will be due this month. It is in the amount of \$7,184,790. I need the council's approval because we are required to match by 10% which will be a little under \$800,000. This is very normal for federal grants. As he just told you about the federal grant we did, I asked for the waiver, and we got it. But we have to provide a resolution in the grant application saying that we will commit to the 10%."

Mr. Williams stated, "Mr. Mayor, given the time constraints, I believe she has to submit it by the end of the week. And she actually had it properly on the other agenda so, I recommend council consider suspending the Rules of Council and approve the resolution if you are so inclined."

Mayor Parham stated, "At this time I will entertain a motion to suspend the Rules of Council at this time."

Council Member Myers made a motion to suspend the Rules of Council. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. There was discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on voice vote. On voice vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

Mayor Parham stated, "At this time I will entertain a motion to approve the resolution for the Tech Hub grant."

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the resolution for the Tech Hub grant. Council Member Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved on voice vote. On voice vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

24-R-7 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA, COMMITTING FUNDS FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER IMPROVEMENTS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE ADVANCED PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING (APM) TECH HUB.

Mayor Parham stated, "The presentation on the Animal Sanctuary has been stricken for tonight."

8. MONTHLY REPORTS:

There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

9. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT:

There are no items for this portion of the agenda.

10. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE:

a. Brief Capital Projects Update

Randall Williams, Assistant Director of Public Works and Utilities, gave a brief update on capital projects.

Key Notes:

- The projected completion date is still around April or May. Some structural repairs may affect that timeframe.
- Since the last update some of the floors had to be taken up. And some work had to be done to get started on repairing the cupola. It was planned to be completed this week or next week.
- Interior and trim work is still being continued.
- Some areas of the roof had to be painted with special paint.
- Light work is being done to make sure that the site is well lit.
- They are looking at proceeding forward with the design phase and the interior.
- The contractor is now scraping and repairing the roof of the Union Train Station before they paint.
- They are awaiting VDOT for an update before they can begin the paving phase.
- Timmons crew is continuing to collect GIS inventory of citywide stormwater assets.
- Data is being collected to be used in modeling the stormwater systems.
- Currently working through Blackwater and Poor Creek Watersheds.

There was discussion among the city council and staff.

11. UTILITIES:

a. Presentation and Update on Department of Utilities

Jerry Byerly, Director of Public Works, and Utilities, gave a brief update on capital projects.

Key points:

- Billing has been moved back into Public Works as of December 11, 2023.
- The phone tree has been modified to ensure all calls are answered.
- There is a 48% vacancy rate in the department that calls for more contracting which is more costly.
- Work orders are in for water main repairs and general repairs.

- Meter replacement has taken place. Modern meters are more accurate and can increase revenue.
- There is a 27% vacancy rate in the wastewater department.
- Currently completing an assessment of the sanitary sewer in the Blandford area.

There was discussion among the city council and staff.

There was discussion among the city council and staff.

12. STREETS:

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

13. FACILITIES:

a. Facilities Update

Key notes:

- General District Court Staff area renovation was completed in September 2023.
- Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court had more cameras installed.
- Two new roofs were put on the fiscal management building in August 2023. A new roof HVAC system was done on the first floor.
- At the Blandford Reception Center, the old boiler system was removed and replaced with a heat pump unit.
- New roof was put on the Blandford Cemetery Maintenance Shop. Two rollup doors were replaced as well.
- Hustings Court boiler was completely rebuilt.
- Petersburg Health Department had two new HVAC units installed on the roof. They are in the process of replacing the roof.
- At the fire department a compressor pressurizes the steps and doors in the cab of the new ladder truck were installed.

14. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

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

15. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA:

Mr. Altman stated, "Just a couple quick updates. I mentioned at previous meetings that we are working on health insurance. It has been sent out for bids and bids came in. And we are working with TLC (The Local Choice) who are reviewing those bids for us to bring forth a recommendation. We are still waiting for our TLC renewal, which is our current health insurance, for them to send us renewal information so that we can compare apples to apples where we are. The salary study, we are moving forward with the wage and compensation study. There will be some focus group meetings in the library March 5th through 7th with employees. We will be sending out some communication to them. With regard to the zoning ordinance, we have a contract, and the contract is down with the city attorney for renewal. Once he finishes the renewal then he will send it up to me we will sign it and we will get to work on the zoning ordinance update. There was a question asked with regard to what we have invested in the LGIP with city funds. If the treasurer wants to come up, I welcome him to provide comments. Or he had indicated to me that we have funds invested in LGIP. I will not steal his thunder, but we do have money invested in LGIP that the city treasurer manages. I will let him walk through that for you."

Paul Mullin, Treasurer, stated, "We have approximately \$5.6 million in our SNAP fund, which is mostly for everything in CIP. It was actually initially started in 2015 CIP. We need to get on the horn of actually spending that money because if we wait a little longer, we will actually start paying penalties on that money. The general LGIT, we have about \$2.1 million dollars. And \$845,000 of that is in the school scholarship fund, so we have about \$7 million dollars in investments right now. And we are getting about 5.64% comfortably right now."

There was discussion among the city council and staff.

16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK:

Mayor Parham stated, "The clerk is still out but I want to give Council Member Westbrook a point of personal privilege."

Council Member Westbrook stated, "With the help of economic development, on Thursday at 5:30pm, right here in the auditorium, we will be having a community meeting. It is open to everyone. We will be expanding the Ramblewood Subdivision. We are bringing Ryan Homes developer to just take in any concerns and understand the community impact as well as letting the residents speak on any concerns as well as positive projects that they may want to see."

Council Member Jones stated, "I want to make mention that today, February 6th, is National Teen Dating Violence Day. All of you who have kids or have been a teen need to take this seriously not only this day but for every day. Watch your children and watch their activities. Talk to them and be available to talk to them. So, let's celebrate that and protect our teens and wear orange. It is listed as today but let's do this every day."

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:

Mr. Williams stated, "I just want to say that anyone that has not been in a closed session of council probably does not appreciate the fast paced and high level and volume of material that is discussed. It is almost a blur sometimes. One of the things that I hoped to do before we adjourned and closed the meeting is to thank the members of council for their condolences in the past week. I did not get a chance to do that so, I wanted to do that today."

18. ADJOURNMENT:

The City Council adjourned at 7:40 p.m.