

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

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

Absent: None

Present from City Council Administration:

City Manager John March Altman, Jr
City Attorney Anthony Williams

2. PRAYER:

Mayor Parham asked Vice Mayor Hill to include in his prayer the victims of the house fire that took place earlier.

Vice Mayor Hill led the city council meeting in the opening 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 determined with the presence of the city council members.

5. PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS:

a. Presentation of a proclamation recognizing Kristi K. Higgins.

Mayor Parham and the council presented Ms. Higgins with a proclamation of recognition.

6. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:

Mayor Parham stated that responses are found under council communications.

7. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (to include minutes of previous meeting/s)

a. Minutes:

-February 6, 2024 – Closed Session Minutes
-February 6, 2024 – Work Session Meeting Minutes
-February 9, 2024 – Emergency Special Closed Session
-February 12, 2024 – Closed Session Minutes

- b. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2023, and ending on June 30, 2024, for the Firearms Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program.

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

8. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS:

- a. Presentation from Jo Ann Glazier on the Animal Sanctuary.

Key Notes:

- This SPCA was founded in 1911 in Petersburg. It is all volunteer work.
- It is maintained by donations and is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
- It assists with medical expenses, animal food, and the spade and nurturing of dogs and cats. It also assists with supplying food to low-income residents.
- It offers a platform for reporting suspected animal cruelty and the needs to do this.
- They collaborate with the local police and animal control to address these reports and work to improve animal welfare through new laws and measures.
- It also includes a bi-weekly newsletter called "Tale of Two Cities."
- They help all the shelters in the area.
- They helped to promote with the city a new animal shelter for the City of Petersburg.

9. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- a. A public hearing for consideration of an ordinance authorizing the City Manager to execute a Lease Agreement toward the Lease of the City – Owned Property at 301 North Sycamore Street.

BACKGROUND: No background information.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the ordinance for the leasing of 301 North Sycamore Street.

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Virginia McCay (Owner of Alibi's) gave an update on the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Shavar Wade, 230 North Sycamore Street, stated, "I work at Old Towne Alibi's. I have been working there since day one. On the agenda tonight is patio expansion. I am here to say that nobody deserves this opportunity more than Kat or her business. From the outside looking in you would not see the full amount of the extent of love, dedication, and compassion that she pores daily into her business and the community. She is truly a special person, and her heart is genuine to the good things that she puts into this world. It is not our intention to hold everyone up tonight as we could easily put out a call for many people to be lined up to speak on behalf of her. I am only here to point out that the number of people in this room behind me feel the same way that I do. We all hope that when this meeting concludes that it will include the ability for Kat to continue to grow her business and spread her love throughout the community. Thank you for your time."

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

There was discussion among the city council members.

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the lease and to direct the funds to go towards Petersburg Academic Sports League and the homeless initiative by Ms. Pat Hines. Council Member Westbrook seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Abstain: Cuthbert

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he is abstaining because Ms. McCay is running for city council seat for the 4th Ward.

24-ORD-2 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT TOWARD THE LEASE OF A CITY-OWNED PROPERTY AT 301 NORTH SYCAMORE STREET.

- b. A public hearing for the consideration of an ordinance authorizing the City Manager to execute a Purchase Agreement toward the Sale of a City – Owned Property at 101 West Washington Street.

BACKGROUND: No background information.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve by ordinance of the sale of 101 West Washington Street.

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Gibson gave an update on their request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments. And I did infer that it might be a dialysis center based on the name of the applicant. So, I am relieved that there is something different and that there is a plan. Because it was lacking a development plan and there wasn't much to go on, so I certainly feel more optimistic about it now. One question remains, that my recollection is that early during his tenure as a council member, Councilor Jones asked that the city change its policy about selling property for one half of the assessed value. The objection being that we are cutting ourselves out of potential revenue. And this particular lot I think is in a prime location. It is very valuable. I believe that the question to change that policy has come up more than once. And based on what we are seeing here with the proposal nothing has happened. I hope that will give some of you pause and you will reconsider what you asked for from this medical practice. I believe that it is in the current climate of desirability of real estate. It does seem like the city is leaving money on the table. So, I hope that you will look at that and even look back in your minutes and own records and observe that this has been talked about before."

Larry Murphy, Interim President of Urban League of Greater Richmond, stated, "I just wanted to stand and speak in support of this proposal. I think that the location of the proposal and the need for additional access to another medical facility, and the fact that it is across from the Mass Transit Center is critical. The need for care in this area, as the doctor's mentioned, will be auxiliary with additional medical facilities that will also be housed in this building. So, I understand, and I support this building. Thank you."

Darius Wyatt, 17200 Eppes Road, stated, "I am here for something totally different. But hearing this I have to stand and support this because my grandfather was under Dr. Gibson for 15 years on dialysis. Just thinking about it, this would be perfect across from the bus station. And it would help so many people. I do not think people realize how many people are on dialysis until you actually go to the center and see. This would be great for Petersburg."

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

There were comments and discussion from the City Council Members.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to approve the ordinance authorizing the sale of 101 West Washington Street provided that approval of the design of the building be subject to council's approval with the provision be included in the development agreement. Council Member Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

24-ORD-3 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A LEASE AGREEMENT TOWARD THE LEASE OF A CITY-OWNED PROPERTY AT 101 WEST WASHINGTON STREET.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "I would like council to study this issue with the sales price on surplus properties and discuss this in closed session when we meet next. To see if we can come to a revised understanding that is more to the city's advantage."

Mr. Williams stated, "I will work on that. Some items have to be discussed in open session, but I will check the code and confirm whether that will properly fall under the closed session exceptions."

- c. A public hearing and the 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 Me-1 zoning districts only.

BACKGROUND: An application for a Special Use Permit was submitted to the Petersburg Department of Planning and Community Development on November 28, 2023, by the applicants Chase Gibrall and Marbell Navarrete. The application is for the operation of a used automobile dealership to house 10 vehicles. The subject property has been used for auto-related businesses and services activity since construction in 1980; however, the commercial, one story, cinder block building with metal roof now appears to be vacant.

Prior to the receipt of this application, the property had been used as a coin-operated four (4) bay car wash with a wax room. There have been several inquiries with Planning Department staff regarding the permitted uses allowed, auto-related uses, such as a vehicle tow lot, used care lot and the continuation of the car wash. None of the previous parties initiated an application to move forward with the Special Use Permit process.

RECOMMENDATION: Planning Commission and Staff recommend the approval with conditions.

1. The lot shall be maintained in an appropriate, clean manner; paved; and vehicles for sale shall be parked only one per space.
2. Only 10 vehicles are to be for-sale on the property at a given time due to parking requirements. A site plan shall be submitted to the Planning Department prior to the issuance of a Business License showing the delineation of such parking spaces.
3. A lighting plan should be submitted and approved by the Planning Department staff to ensure residentially used properties will not be impacted by glare or spillover.

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Paula Chester, 1013 Oakmont Drive, stated, "Is this location in the Battlefield Subdivision or is it Deerfield Drive and one of those streets over there?"

Vice Mayor Hill stated, "Yes. That is in Oakhurst. It is right almost in the neighborhood when you first come in. It is right behind where Drivetime used to be. It was a carwash at one time years ago."

Chase Gibrall, 2525 Deerfield Drive, stated, "I had as a carwash before, and they were not taking such good care of it. I had a lot of people that wanted to put a dealership in there. It has been empty since November because I am trying to put something in there that is going to be better and not disturb the neighborhood as much. It seems like the only problem from planning was that they did not want a lot of commotion in the neighborhood. I figured that a car dealership would be less commotion than a carwash."

Marie 2564

Marie, Owner of Dealership stated, "At the last meeting when we met, I was telling them that we plan n keeping everything clean. There are only going to be ten cars for sale. As again, we are a small dealership venturing in this new business. I just wanted to leave that with you guys. We plan on keeping everything good for the community."

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

There was discussion among the city council members and staff.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to deny the request for a Special Use Permit. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

- d. A public hearing and the 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.

BACKGROUND: N/A

RECOMMENDATION: Planning Commission and staff recommend approval with conditions:

1. All vehicles are to be stored within the confines of the property's fence.
2. Beyond vehicles, no open, outdoor storage is permitted.
3. The site shall be properly lit with lighting directed in a downward and inward position to not spillover onto adjacent properties. A lighting plan shall be submitted and approved by the Planning Department staff prior to the issuance of a Business License.

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

Council Member Westbrook made a motion to deny approval of a Special Use Permit for Grand Generation, LLC. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion. There was discussion on the motion. The

motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "I think that this city council has recognized in the past and has recognized tonight that it is a new day in Petersburg and the aesthetics are important. And we do not want just used car lots and lots for storage of vehicles. That is not the image that we want in Petersburg. That is not our future or our growth industry. And I hope that the Department of Planning will take that into account in the future. That is my personal request. Thank you."

- e. A public hearing and the consideration of an ordinance to amend and readopt Article 3, Definitions, and Article 19, Off-Street Parking Regulations, to clarify the requirement of driveways for low-density housing at the request of the Planning Commission.

BACKGROUND: Though the City Ordinance under Article 19, Off Street Parking Regulations, states that parking spaces are required for residential development, the issue of developers not installing driveways prior to requesting a certificate of occupancy reveals that the ordinance needs clarification.

RECOMMENDATION: Planning Commission recommends approval of the text amendment.

Naomi Siodmok, Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to table action on the request of amendments to the text amendments regarding off-street parking until the next business meeting of city council. Council Member Myers seconded the motion. There was discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he handed out paperwork regarding the off-street parking to all the members of council to review. He stated that particular information regarding parking in the front yard on the grass is no longer in the ordinance.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to refer the former provision of Section 4 Subpart 8 to the Planning Commission as a proposed text amendment for their consideration and recommendation to city council.

Council Member Myers stated, "Councilman Cuthbert, I know you said something about parking in the front yard, but we did create an ordinance against that with a fine. So, we probably need the clerk to find that ordinance."

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "If we got it great, But I could not find it. Can we leave it like this? Do you want to revisit this at our next business meeting?"

Council Member Myers stated, "Yes. But if I recall, we did adopt something with a fine for parking in front of your house."

Mr. Altman stated, "Would you want to talk about this at the work session? This sounds like a good work session topic to work through before we bring something for action."

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to table action on Article 19, Off Street Parking Regulations,

and move it to the work session on March 4th for discussion. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on voice vote. On voice vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham

- f. Consideration to accept a donation in the amount of \$500,000 from People's Advantage Federal Credit Union – 2nd Reading.

BACKGROUND: The City of Petersburg and People's Advantage Federal Credit Union (PAFCU) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding and Sponsorship Agreement where PAFCU agreed to invest \$500,000 toward the construction and maintenance of the Petersburg High School Fieldhouse. The city has received sponsorship funds in accordance with the MOU. Once City Council formally accepts the donation, city staff will transfer the funds to the Petersburg High School Stadium Enhancement Committee, a 501(c)3, that is undertaking the fundraising and construction of a new fieldhouse/athletic training facility at Petersburg High School. The funds are budgeted and appropriated as part of the FY24 budget amendment.

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the donation of \$500,000 by People's Advantage Federal Credit Union and direct the City Manager to transfer the funds to the Petersburg High School Stadium Enhancement Committee.

Mr. Altman gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

Council Member Myers made a motion to accept the donation of 500,000 by People's Advantage Federal Credit Union and direct the City Manager to transfer the funds to the Petersburg High School Stadium Enhancement Committee. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Smith-Lee

- g. A public hearing to amend the FY2023-2024 Budget.

BACKGROUND: The Finance Department takes a very conservative position when projecting revenue. Our conservative approach allowed the city to accumulate a strong general fund balance. The current financial policy requires that the city maintain a 17% actual expenditure fund balance. The city's current fund balance through the FY2022 fiscal year was 53% (\$40 million). The FY2023 unaudited fund balance projects a large fund balance increase. After the recent close of FY2023, we have completed a detailed revenue analysis through January 31, 2024, and have determined that some revenue categories needed to be updated. Please note that the Finance Department's requested budget modification updates are still very conservative, and still anticipate a significant increase in fund balance.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the amendment and appropriation ordinance.

Garry Cozier, Budget Analyst, gave a brief overview of the request.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Barbra Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "Thank you. That was an enlightening presentation because I had a lot of questions from looking at the agenda package. And some of them have been answered. I did want to comment that this is the first time that we have seen the ordinance. So, I believe by the Rules of Council you will not be able to vote on this tonight. Looking at this expenditure chart, the two things at the bottom, the special projects, and the contingency, that kind of looks like slush funds. I mean it does not have anything specific and I feel like for almost \$900,000 there should be more information about what your plans

are. But let me jump back to something else about the revenue, which was on the previous slide. You had something in there for \$766,593 for additional public assistance and children services revenue. It seems like how does that revenue switch over to be being spent on other things that do not have to do with that. That is the part that I do not understand. I do understand but let's go back to the other slide. The worker's compensation, these are the kind of questions that I think that you guys should be asking. I mean that there are some answers here, but you have to dig a little deeper. The \$750,000 increase, the original budget for worker's compensation was \$250,000. So, if you spend all of that and you need another \$750,000 there is something irregular going on. There is an increase in worker's compensation cases. Are there a lot of injuries? The audit and compliance contracts, I remember the presentation of the spending through November to December and all that money was spent down. So, there is no surprise for the increase here. But the question is why would we under budget for so much. Those are the kind of things that we budget for every year. WE do not have an in-house capacity to do audits and compliances. And we have not for years. I mean I question why so much of an increase. You already know what I think about the library. I mean it says a lot about your priorities. But I did want to mention one thing. When you look at what the price tag that was given for this conference room addition, it was supposed to be basically a private fundraising effort to pay for it. The city, when I add up all the different money that has gone towards this conference center it is 37% of the total. That is a lot. Anyway, I mean it's done. It just says a lot about your priorities. Now the Southside Virginia Emergency Crew, there is a later piece in the agenda package about that and it is confusing. It says something about a \$300,000 increase. So, I do not know does it mean we need \$650,000 to add or we need to add \$300,000 and we already had a \$350,000 budget. Excuse me if I get the numbers wrong because I do not have an agenda packet in front of me. When you get to that part, you will see that it says something about a \$300,000 increase in a couple of places in the memo. You explained the bond debt and I thank you for that. Those were my questions. And again, the ordinance is only being supplied tonight in this agenda package. It needs to come back a second time to be voted on. Thank you."

Seeing no further hands, Mayor Parham closed public comments.

9. **PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:** A public information period, limited in time to 30 minutes, shall be part of an Order of Business at each regular council meeting. Each speaker shall be a resident or business owner of the City and shall be limited to three minutes. No speaker will be permitted to speak on any item scheduled for consideration on the regular docket of the meeting at which the speaker is to speak. The order of speakers, limited by the 30-minute time period, shall be determined as follows:
- a) First, in chronological order of the notice, persons who have notified the Clerk no later than 12:00 noon of the day of the meeting,
 - b) Second, in chronological order of their sign up, persons who have signed a sign-up sheet placed by the Clerk in the rear of the meeting room prior to the meeting.

Shayla Pittman, Program Administrator for Urban League of Greater Richmond, stated, "Today, I come before you to present an opportunity that holds immense potential to uplift our community and invest in the future of Petersburg Public School students. The program that I am referring to is "L.E.E.P (Leading with Education, Equity and Access Program." Our mission is clear. To recruit potential tutors who would dedicate themselves to empowering Petersburg Public Schools students in grades 3rd through 12th in one-on-one tutoring and small group sessions tailored to individual needs. We seek your support in spreading the word and encouraging qualified individuals to join us in this endeavor. The subjects that we cover are fundamental pillars of education of math, English, science, and history. Our goal is to provide comprehensive support with fostering a holistic learning experience that equips students to success in all aspects of their life. Tutors in our program are valued and compensated \$15/hr. with flexibility in scheduling to accommodate personal commitments. Transportation is provided upon request, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Before stepping into the tutoring role, our tutors undergo an intensive three-week training program that is led by myself in conjunction with Petersburg Public School Instructional Specialist. This training includes subject matter guidance. Scheduling is designated with both students, tutors, and my needs. Tutors have the freedom to create schedules based on personal availability with assignments thoughtfully scheduled to exclude student

lunch periods. Applying to become a tutor is simple, interested individuals can complete the online interest forms or connect with us through Urban League of Greater Richmond through social media platforms. In conclusion, the LEEP tutoring program is not just about academic support. It is about empowerment, opportunity, and investing in the future of Petersburg. I urge you to support us in recruiting potential tutors and spreading the word about this invaluable program. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon Street, stated, "I will start by asking that you seek citizen input on your list of casino operators potential upfront funding uses. Now, I want to go back and pick up on a discussion from the last meeting when Councilman Cuthbert questioned how much of the city's unassigned fund balance and borrowed money is invested in the Local Government Investment Pool or LGIP. Treasurer Mullin said that the current \$7 million dollars in investments was made some time ago and that the \$50 million dollars in general fund balance was not invested. The city manager incorrectly pointed out that the \$50 million dollars mentioned was operating funds and this derailed the discussion. I want to offer some facts to get us back on track. The city's general fund operating budget is \$84 million dollars and not \$50 million dollars. At your January work session, the acting CFO showed a chart showing that as of FY2022, the unassigned fund balance was \$39 million dollars. Considering that the pre-audited general fund balance for FY2023 is over \$19 million dollars. It is responsible to project a current unassigned general fund balance of about \$55 million dollars. This is what Councilman Cuthbert was talking about. Not even getting into investing any operating funds or monies that the city has recently borrowed. My other concern is the constant excuse making that the city cannot make a move in finance without a meeting of the Finance Committee. An entity that Davenport recommended that you formerly approved in early July. But you cannot get together to make any decisions because Davenport is too busy to participate. We have heard that on several occasions. Based on your long history with Davenport as the city's financial advisory and the fact that you are still using the Robert Bobb Group to help with financial issues, it is fair to assume that you trust them and respect their guidance. Robert Bobb urged you to create a finance committee six and a half years ago. Now Davenport started pushing it last year, yet you still have not done anything with it. Please stop trying to impress Standard, Poor's, and Moody's with having a finance committee on paper and figure out how you can actually use the committee to act upon sound investment advice. That way you can stop passing up millions of dollars in interest income that the city should be earning instead of passively sitting there and listening to repeated excuses of this meeting that cannot take place. Thank you."

Genevieve Lohr, 19 Guarantee Street, stated, "First earlier tonight we talked about the aesthetic of Petersburg and car lots, car washes, etc. However, it kind of brought to mind something that was interesting to me because I am pretty sure we had a similar conversation about Dollar General's in Petersburg a while back. But almost every day when I drive to work, I see where they are building a new Dollar General on 460. I find it a little interesting. We talked about something and then the follow through is not there. And it is not just with Dollar General, but it is really intriguing to me that this is where things happen. I urge you to try and remember those things and follow-up with them. Because there is really not a lot of confidence when something is said and the follow through is not there. So, I think that is important. Second, I love our library and I work in this library. I meet clients in this library, and I attend meetings here personally and professionally. It is an amazing setting and I think that everyone would agree with that. However, this library is not open on Sundays. This library is only open for five hours on Saturdays and it closes at 5pm or 6pm on Fridays. It is the only safe location for children and adults who need a place to go in this city and its closed half of every weekend. And that is not acceptable. So, I recommend with some of your available funding of approximately \$800,000 in the budget that you think about increasing the hours of the library. There is no reason that we need to build another building. We can just open the one that is running right now. Last, two weeks ago we heard from a number of people about homelessness in the city. People who are professionals, people who are kind and good people. People who are doing the work every single day. A woman who still has a full-time job who is in her 70s who does not live in Petersburg and comes to our city every single day she is working to talk to people under a bridge or an empty house. And I listened to our city council. First of all, say negative things about these efforts being made but then no one defending the people who were here. And it was embarrassing. So, I recommend you spend some time with the people who are doing the work because it is being done. And it is actually being done by people who do not live here sometimes who come to our city to help. And I think that it

is appropriate that you guys spend some time with them to see what they are doing and how they are impacting us. Thank you.”

Rozelia Weaver Roy, 2942 Homestead Drive, stated, “I am here this evening as it relates to the change in real estate assessment. Many individuals received notices that their assessment has changed. We realize that there are many changes as it relates to city property and the surrounding community in which they live. And what I am referring to is where they live in that environment on the street and the surrounding community within their street location. The housing cost has increased for some individuals, and this is the assessment over 100% and it is having a devastating reaction on our population. Some citizens are fortunate enough to own homes as many have had them for many years. Since Petersburg is a very historic environment, many houses have experienced environmental changes. Some remain livable and some not. As we have a high percentage of blight property, as a result individuals and companies have purchased homes and restored them and are selling them at very high cost. This raises the value of your home even if you have not done anything to upgrade it. Some individuals have been assessed with an increase of 100% or more. As I look at the population that we have here in Petersburg, as reflected in the U.S. Census report, our poverty rate is 22.2%. The state average is 10.6%. The housing ownership is 35.9% and over 75.8% still have house payments. This situation is really a concern of many people in the city. Our employment rate is 5.40%. And as you know the rate should be higher as it relates to employment. Homeownership as it has been said is 37.4%. I know that this is a nationwide trend for the assessment of houses and their worth. Many of us desire a beautiful and prosperous Petersburg. As we have paid through the years to keep the city afloat. We desire to reduce blight and have beautiful neighborhoods. Many have left but we have stayed. But now some of us will be forced to leave because of the impact of change. Progress is good for our city. As a recommendation, possibly we can cap the amount of increase for the property. Another recommendation to make available is grants or funding to individuals who are experiencing hardships in meeting payments and have a designated person to help them to apply for the grants. So, we need to continue to bring large and small businesses to help us to stand our city. We want to find a way to protect residents’ interests without blocking new development that might actually benefit us. We need to find ways to create inclusive neighborhoods that welcome newcomers while enabling all of us to stay and benefit from new benefits and services and amenities. We would like to use some of these resources to generate the individuals that will possibly be displaced. By providing financial assistance to current homeowners, helping small businesses, and preserving our community. Thank you.”

11. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR OR OTHER MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL:

Council Member Cuthbert stated, “Mr. Altman, would you bring council up-to-date as to your efforts to convene the finance committee so we can move forward with the decision as to how much of the city’s cash to transfer to the local government investment pool?”

Mr. Altman stated, “Yes. I have dates to share with the mayor for next week and the following week to schedule a meeting of the finance committee.”

Council Member Cuthbert stated, “Alright. Do you think that the meeting can take place before the work session on March 5th?”

Mr. Altman stated, “Yes. I believe so.”

Council Member Cuthbert stated, “That would be great. Would you at the March 5th meeting in open session give the council and the public an update on the finance committee. That would be great. Thank you. Mr. City Manager, also I was intrigued by this three quarters of a million dollar increase in a worker’s comp premium when we had budgeted around a quarter million. So, it tripled? Or an additional tripling is being called for. I am scratching my head. That is a lot of money.”

Mr. Cozier stated, "I can speak to that. Just from the data from the last few years we have spent over a million dollars in workers compensation. So, the price was just underrepresented for this fiscal year significantly."

Council Member Cuthbert asked Mr. VanVorhees to add information to the screen for council and public to see.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "About 11 months ago, I took this photo on March 18, 2023. I am here to celebrate the progress and to let you see the progress that is being made. It took a lot of pushing by a lot of people in the city, but this is a moment to celebrate. I certainly thank code enforcement for getting this to this point. With that said, let me shift to another visual. I took this photograph this morning also. This is on Webster Street facing Glenside Court. So, this is the west side of Webster Street facing Glenside Court. Now, I wonder why city staff does not recognize something like this. I am happy to bring this to their attention, but you have to be blind not to see that this is a problem. And we are told that the job of the city council is to make policy and it's the job of the administration to attend to the nuts and bolts of running the city. Well, that is not happening. And I would hope that Mr. Altman would ask code enforcement to do what is appropriate with this building. This is just an example, and it is examples like this all over town."

Mayor Parham asked Council Member Cuthbert if he can tell everyone what the property used to be.

Council Member Cuthbert stated, "I am guessing it was a garage for private homes. But I am honored that you think that I might remember. But I really don't. It looks like it could have been a garage at one time for cars that were small. I am doing a lot of guessing. And in any event Mr. Altman would you ask code enforcement to bring its powers to bear. Thank you."

Council Member Jones stated, "I have a list of things, so everyone bear with me. I am going to go down that list and I am going to say some things today that is probably going to make you cringe but I hope it makes you smile in the end. First, I want to say thank you to everyone who is up here and everyone that is out there. I am going to go by what I have been hearing and reading in public. I read today that somebody said that kids do not need a new school, we need to make them come to school. Now, I have a problem with that statement. We have not had a new school in years since the 70s. And would you come to a school or want to come to a school where you felt not wanted. If that school was old or outdated or the school was the same school your grandparents went to. If that school did not have any pride or if it looked like a prison, then it did an educational facility. Would you want to come to that school? Not only do the children need a new school, but the educators also need a new school. This is what generates pride. We keep keeping them in these jails. That's what they are. They are prisoners before they go to prison. That is what we are doing. Our kids and educators need new schools. Simple as that. And I am already fighting for brick for brick. That is what I am pushing for right now. We are definitely going to approach the conversation on real estate. I talked to the city manager, and I have been educated on a lot of stuff. So, I want you guys to know that even though the assessment went up, it is up to council to vote to make sure that what you are paying does not go up. Am I correct on that? The tax rates?"

Mayor Parham stated yes.

Council Member Jones stated, "I am going to keep it real blunt today because I have too. I want to sleep good at night. And you cannot sleep good at night with holding something on my mind. To the Fire Chief that is sitting in here, Mr. Magann, I trained you when you first came into this department. Do you remember that? And I want you to know heart to heart, person to person, and man to man, council member to the new Deputy Chief Magann, give him a hand by the way. He is the new deputy chief for the fire department. I want you to know Magann that I was not against you. What I am against is any deviation from policy and procedures. But now that you have this position, I am going to hold you accountable, but I know that you will do a good job. Because you are a good job kind of dude. So, thank you and congratulations Magann. My next topic is heroes. We need heroes. And we had heroes operating today by way of police, fire, and EMS. We lost someone today. We lost a three-year-old who happens to be a family member. I cannot thank you enough for

the efforts Chief Christian and your entire staff. The command staff was on scene and the fire department doing their thing. This is what a hero is everybody. A hero is somebody who goes to work risking their lives and not thinking about that paycheck. See there is a lot of people in the fire department and police department that want more money but that is not what being a firefighter or police officer is about. We know that you have families to take care of. It is about answering the call to the city that you are serving. And they did just that today. It could have been worse. And I just want to say thank you to the fire department, police department and EMS workers. Last but not least this is Black history month. Please pardon me for the language that I am about to use. But I cannot sleep tonight if I don't say it. It has been on my mind for a long time. Black History Month, to the white people that is in the city, this is not just your city. To the Black people in the city, this is not just your city. But to the citizens in the city and the business owners and taxpayers in the city and regardless of what you look like, this is your city. This is our city. This is Petersburg. And what is missing is our pride. See we have to kill that divide and noise and give birth to a new day like Mr. Cuthbert said. This is Petersburg. And we have to start germinating those seeds of life to be just that. Like you said we don't want junk or trash here. You all see for yourself the young man who was just here pleading for us to open a dealership and then when it didn't go his way, he talked cash mess about us. If we have to go in one of his vehicles, then we probably will not go anywhere. I am Black today, this month, and I am proud to be black. I am going to be black everyday of the year. You are going to be white today, tomorrow, and every day of the year. You Arabic today, Asian today, and you will be all of those everyday of the year. The issue is to be proud of who you are. The problem is when your proudness interferes with the health, safety, and lifestyle of others. That is the problem. So be proud to be white because I am proud to be black. But let's not make that interfere and hurt anybody's lifestyle or bring harm to anybody in the future. And you all see the way that the world is going today. There is a lot of interracial relationships and love blooming in the air just like the trees in the springtime, different colors. Twenty years from now some of your grandkids will be some of everything. God is fixing it that way. We are one. But in Petersburg, protect this city. I challenge every business owner, every citizen, everybody here to protect this city. Have pride in it. Pick up the trash if you see it. You do not have to call anyone if you see trash on the street. Just pick it up. We used to be a city full of pride. We have to go back to being a city full of pride. That's all I got."

Council Member Westbrook stated, "Thank everyone for being here tonight. I was blessed to listen to Ms. Liz Cheney from the Republican Party this past Saturday at the Richmond Forum. I have said it before and just to put it on the record again that I hope that we do not miss the opportunity that is coming to town in about eight months. Virginia State is hosting the Presidential General Election Debate on October 1st. This is the first time being held at a HBCU. We are doing a lot of work to prepare and hope that the city doesn't miss that opportunity as well from business owners downtown to citizens. Because however you feel about it the circus is coming to town, and I am going to leave it at that. Hopefully, economically we can prioritize and monetize it. I hope that we can start a health committee. Hopefully, we can talk about it more to present it to everyone in the audience as well as the citizens. The purpose of this committee is not to say that we cannot do an arts committee or other things like that. But I have just been seeing in the past six months to a year, I do believe there is a problem with the overall health of the city. I am not knocking the numbers, but very little impact is happening. Are we allowing the higher ups in the General Assembly to say that they are doing something? How can we really get the citizens to do something? I spoke with the mayor, and I understand that there are a lot of private business but hopefully we as citizens can come together and put our ideas on how we can get to the doctor more to get our check-ups. So, I did ask Mr. Altman to see if we can come up with a health committee with members being selected by him and the council and report back to us bi-monthly. And hopefully it can be put on our legislative agenda going forward into the 2024-2025 session which will be next year. As we do our Comprehensive Plan, and I know that it will be wrapped up soon, I hope that we can come up with a Petersburg West Plan. Because I do believe as Council Member Cuthbert said that it is a new day, and it is not to go against car dealerships and storage lots. I just do not want Petersburg to be an automotive haven when there are better places to go if you want a new car on 95. But we get all the used cars and towing and storage places. So, I would like to call it the Magnificent Mile which is West Washington Street where you have the beautiful Dominion Power building sitting on the edge in Dinwiddie coming all the way to the Pepsi-Cola Plant into Council Member Smith-Lee 6th Ward. I do know that basketball season is wrapped up which is a big money-making sport as far as support. But please do not forget to support your wrestling team, forensic

team, and other teams that the youth are still doing things with. Going back to parks and recreation, I know that they are signing up for first kick and softball. So, let's get our kids involved with those sports as well and again change the overall health of the city. Next, I wish Mr. Randall Williams or someone from public works, there is a dead animal or deer that has been on the side of Defense Road right by the Ramblewood Subdivision for about a week. Hopefully, someone can get that deer up so that we do not let roadkill stay there for too long. Happy Black History Month as we move into Women's History Month in March. So, hopefully as much as we celebrate Black History Month, we can also celebrate the greater history that the women of Petersburg do next month. And hopefully again, working with Mr. Marquis Allen, we can have some celebrations for the women of Petersburg. Thank you."

Council Member Myers stated, "I do not have anything Mr. Mayor but I would like to thank the public works department and Mr. Richard Harris for all that they did with the leaf collection in Ward 5. And thank the public works department as well."

Council Member Smith-Lee stated, "I just want you all to know that Ward 6 and 7 is going to have joint meetings on April 4th at 6pm. And I promise you that Mr. Westbrook will not take over. Thank you, Mr. Richard Harris, and Mr. Steve Stenson, in reference to all the great work that you have been doing in the last past three months with the call of duty. You all are on it. I truly appreciate it. I just want everyone to know that customer service in billing and collection is getting better. If you call down there and you do not get them right away, and you leave a message, they will call you back. So, I think that we need to clap on that. Thank you, Mr. March, and Mr. Byerly, to make sure that customers that call and want answers, that now things are moving forward. That concludes my report."

Vice Mayor Hill stated, "Thank everyone for coming out today. I want to thank our city manager, public works, and the contractors for doing our curbside. You all know that throughout the City of Petersburg they are making it handicap accessible. So, that is a good thing. I believe that they just finished Crater Road. Now I think that they are on Wythe and Washington Street. I believe that is going to help our bicycle and individuals who are handicapped to be able to access the sidewalks a little bit better. Thank you. There is a change in our city that you can kind of see. Even with the council. When certain things come, and we know what we want, and we know what we don't want. And we are pretty much unified on that. And it was evident today and some meetings ago that there are certain things that we want in our city and certain things that we do not want. I am just going to leave it at that. Also, that the blight is getting a lot better than it was. If you go through some of the neighborhoods a lot of the homes are being renovated. I am not going to talk about celebrating African American History Month. Every month to me is African American History Month. But the other two council members spoke on it well. Ward 2 will be having a meeting in the month of March. I have to get with the church. I was out of town, so I have to get back with them. And to our first responders, I was in a restaurant today and someone that I knew that was an employ of the city and he said that the first responders responded well. He was listening to his scanner to know and hear what was going on. Now I just want to say kudos to you all. A lot of time I know a lot of things are said. Police Officers parking behind buildings and things like that. You guys did an amazing job today. I just want to thank you all again for the work that you continue to do for the City of Petersburg. Also, Legends Park, I was happy that they have the tennis courts all fixed now and Petersburg High are now having tennis matches over there right now. That ends my report."

Mayor Parham stated, "I just want to just close out today again in thanking our first responders and everyone at Southside Virginia Emergency Crew, Petersburg Fire, and Petersburg Police. We cannot thank you guys enough for giving your all everyday especially on a day today. I know today was challenging and emotional draining. We cannot thank you enough. And ask that God look over each and every one of you all and bless when you go out here and provide services to the City of Petersburg. I also want to thank Marquis Allen and his staff for Black History Month. He has his last event coming up this Friday, and I am asking everyone to come out and support one of Petersburg own, Rodney Stith. He is coming to Petersburg to perform and close out. It has almost been Black History Month celebrations every weekend. The book signing event here was spectacular as well that he had a few weeks ago. I also want to thank some of the trailblazers that have come through the City of Petersburg during Black History Month. Council Member Jones just

reflected on that, and I just cannot just sit here in this fine library and not think about Wyatt T. Walker and the struggles that he went through at the McKenney Library. I know you all can remember us being kids here going to that old library. I remember the kid section was down in the basement of that library. And I never liked going to the basement to see the books. It was like a dungeon. The only thing that I can say now is that we have a first-class facility here for our kids to have a top-notch library. Even this space here that has become the center of the community in the City of Petersburg. It has provided so many weddings and events from all elected officials. It is the center of community activity, and I am proud that we have partnered with the Library Foundation to get this off the ground. Even though we contributed 37% it was well spent here. Also, I just want to thank Mrs. Ann Taylor and P.T. They have done so much here in growing up here as well. We thank them for always being ambassadors here. You think about doing this Black History Month here of trailblazers here who are unselfish and doing it for about 40 years. They have always been generous with the monies that they have to help in Petersburg, even with the library. Again, thank everybody and wish everyone a wonderful rest of the month. See you here Friday for the final Black History Month celebration.”

12. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

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

13. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT:

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

14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

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

15. NEW BUSINESS:

- a. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2024, and ending on June 30, 2025, for the Edward Byrne JAG Grant in the amount of \$33,140 – 2nd Reading

BACKGROUND: Petersburg Bureau of Police applied for and was awarded the Edward Byrne JAG Grant. See attached ordinance.

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend that council accept the funds for the Edward Byrne Grant to be spent in the fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to accept the funds and approve the ordinance. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

Mayor Parham opened the floor for public comments.

Seeing no hands, Mayor Parham closed the public comments.

The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

24-ORD-4 AN ORDINANCE, AS AMENDED, SAID ORDINANCE MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING JULY 1, 2024, AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, FOR THE FY23 EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$33,140.

- b. Consideration of a resolution of support for the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program.

BACKGROUND: Our community, City of Petersburg, Virginia, wishes to participate in the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program. The leadership of this community fully realizes this program requires dedicated efforts. By making entry into this program, we are pledging our honest efforts to become designated as a “Certified Crime Prevention Community.”

The program requires the existence of formation of a local community crime prevention/community safety council or coalition. The name of the council/coalition is The Ace Team. The goal of the community is to successfully complete this program within six (6) months of the day of the official start date, to be recorded when the program manual is delivered.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve of the resolution of support for the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the resolution of support for the Certified Crime Prevention Community Certification Program. Council Member Westbrook seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

24-R-12 A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CERTIFIED CRIME PREVENTION COMMUNITY PROGRAM.

- c. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for State Aid to Public Libraries Revenue Funds in the amount of \$34,450 – 1st Reading

BACKGROUND: State Aid to Public Libraries is a formula based grant that encourages the formation of library systems as the regional, county and city level. The Petersburg Public Library has received notification from the Library of Virginia that its State Aid to Public Libraries appropriation is \$227,628 for FY24. This is \$34,650 more than the anticipated in the City’s FY24 budget which takes into consideration \$193,976 for State Aid to Public Libraries. The additional funds will be used for eligible State Aid expenditures to include the purchase of books, magazines, e-books, newspapers, and other library materials necessary to enhance the library collection offerings to the patrons of the Petersburg Public Library.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the appropriation ordinance.

Mayor Parham stated, “Mr. Williams, does this need to be added to our consent agenda.”

Mr. Williams stated, “You can just add the first reading now. But it will have to come back before you adopt it.”

Mayor Parham stated, “This is first reading.”

- d. Consideration of an appropriation ordinance for the donation to the Petersburg Public Library in the amount of \$19,620. – 1st Reading

BACKGROUND: In November 2023, the Petersburg Public Library was notified that it was not one of the beneficiaries of the estate of Nina G. Thaxter. Mrs. Thaxter was once a resident of Petersburg, Virginia but was residing in Arizona. In December 2023, the Petersburg Public Library received a check in the amount of \$19,620 from the estate of Mrs. Thaxter. These funds will be used to update the computers in the children's section of the library.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the appropriation ordinance in the amount of \$19,620.

Mayor Parham stated that being that this item is a first reading it will be added to the second meeting in March.

- e. Consideration of a Memorandum of Understanding with Southside Virginia Emergency Crew.

BACKGROUND: SVEC has provided Advanced Life Support (ALS) service to the citizens of Petersburg since 1945. In 2019, SVEC and the City of Petersburg entered a MOU for the provision of EMS/ALS service. Many factors, including a 60% increase in operating expenses due to an increase in call volume of over 30%, have rendered the renewal of the current agreement an unsustainable option for SVEC. To address the increased call volume SVEC is changing its staffing model to add an additional daytime unit. This will result in Staffing/Units available as follows:

2 EMS ALS Transport Units-7 days a week, 1930-0730

3 EMS ALS Transport Units-7 days a week, 0730-1930

4 EMS ALS Transport Units-5 days a week, 0900-1700

SVEC will act as the primary EMS response agency during peak call times of 0730-1930 – 7 days/week. In the event all SVEC response vehicles are unavailable, the Petersburg Fire Rescue & Emergency Services (PFRES) will provide additional EMS Transport Units to respond or request mutual aid from a neighboring locality. This will result in an increased cost to the city of \$300,000 annually.

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize the City Manager to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with SVEC for the provision of EMS Services for 2-years at a cost of \$650,000 annually.

Mr. Altman gave a brief update on the request.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Southside Virginia Emergency Crew. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

- f. Consideration of an Unsolicited PPEA Proposal – Design and Construction of a New Courthouse.

BACKGROUND: City of Petersburg has received and accepted an unsolicited proposal from Gilbane Building Company and Commonwealth Architects under the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002, Virginia Code §§ 56-575.1, et seq., (hereafter referred to as "PPEA"), and the City's PPEA implementing procedures for the design and construction of City of Petersburg's new consolidated courthouse. The location proposed is the site located across from on property identified as 27-37 E. Tabb Street and 40 Henry Street, further identified as City of Petersburg Real Estate Tax Map Nos. 011220006 and 011220019, respectively.

The City intends to evaluate the proposal simultaneously along with any competing proposals that comply with the PPEA, the City's implementing procedures, and the instructions, terms, and conditions in a more detailed "Receipt of Unsolicited PPEA Proposal and Solicitation of Competing Proposals" ("Solicitation"), which has

been issued concurrently with this Notice. The City and may negotiate an interim or comprehensive agreement with the proposer based on the proposal. A public copy of the unsolicited proposal received is included in this notice, subject to the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Code of Virginia, PPEA, and City Purchasing Policy.

RECOMMENDATION: A motion to accept the Unsolicited PPEA from Gilbane Building Company and Commonwealth Architects for the purpose of publication and conceptual phase consideration and direct the City Manager to proceed with issuance of a notice soliciting competing proposals and corresponding review and recommendation.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to accept the unsolicited proposal from Gilbane for courthouse construction in accordance with Section 3(A)1 of the city's PPEA Guidelines for the purpose of publication and conceptual phase consideration with the exception that council directs the manager to extend the minimal 45 day publication requirement contained in paragraph 3(A)2 of the city's PPEA Guidelines to 90 days instead of 45, in order to allow sufficient time to competing unsolicited proposes to come forward with their proposals. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion. The motion was approved on roll call vote. On roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Smith-Lee, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; Absent: Myers

16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK:

Mr. Altman stated, "If I could, because I did not get a chance to do it earlier. I want to thank all of our first responders. Having been on scene this morning when they arrived that apartment was fully involved. And if it was for the courage of our fire department going in and really tackling that fire. It really could have damaged a whole lot more than just one unit. Unfortunately, we did have a loss of life and that is tragic, but as Council Member Jones indicated earlier, we have heroes that walk among us that serve our city every day. And I will add that the mom that went back in, is a hero. She is a hero because she went back in to save the child. She was burned but we are thankful."

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM CITY ATTORNEY:

Mr. Williams stated that he has no report.

18. ADJOURNMENT:

The City Council adjourned at 7:32 p.m.