The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The meeting video link is https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/315382.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Samuel Parham, Mayor – Ward 3
Darrin Hill, Vice Mayor – Ward 2
Marlow Jones, Councilor – Ward 1
Charles Cuthbert, Jr., Councilor – Ward 4
W. Howard Myers, Councilor– Ward 5
Annette Smith-Lee, Councilor - Ward 6
Arnold Westbrook, Jr., Councilor – Ward 7

Absent:

Present from City Council Administration:

City Manager John March Altman, Jr.
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
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. PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS:

a. Prostate Cancer Awareness Month Proclamation

Mayor Parham read a proclamation recognizing September 2024 as Prostate Cancer Awareness Month and encouraged residents to participate in prostate cancer screenings.

6. PRESENTATIONS:

a. Davenport Presentation – New Courthouse Plan of Finance

Mr. David Rose of Davenport & Co. Associates addressed City Council and stated that Davenport serves as the City of Petersburg's independent financial advisor, beginning work with the City in 2012 and recognizing some concerns at that time. He said that in 2016, the City discovered that it had been downgraded below an investment-grade rating but has since instituted activities that have yielded a considerable turnaround.

Mr. Rose began by sharing how their strong credit ratings have been a significant achievement. He mentioned that all three National Credit Rating Agencies—Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch—have rated them in the A plus range, specifically A1 and A plus. He said that this was a marked improvement from their double B rating in 2016. He explained that they had borrowed $30 million for courthouse-related expenses a year ago and were planning to borrow an additional $50 million by the end of the year.

Mr. Rose spoke about capital funding, breaking it into two parts: the general fund, which includes the courthouse, police station, animal shelter, and general infrastructure, and the self-supporting water and sewer utility fund. He emphasized that the general fund borrowing would be efficient as interest rates were more favorable than the previous year and they could reinvest the borrowed money through the state non-arbitrage program (SNAP) to earn an interest rate equal to or higher than their borrowing costs.

Mr. Rose addressed the ongoing school-related project, noting that they had been awarded a $30 million low-interest literary loan from the Commonwealth at 2%, along with a grant covering up to 30% of the project cost. He clarified that this school project was still in early stages and their current priority was the $50 million borrowing for general capital projects. For the self-supporting water and sewer utility fund, Mr. Rose explained that no general fund monies were used; instead, the projects were funded through user fees from businesses and individuals receiving water and sewer services.

Mr. Rose mentioned that they were working with outside rate consultants and engineering consultants to develop an overall capital needs and funding plan, with the expectation of presenting this plan in the future. He reiterated that the $50 million borrowing for general capital projects was separate from the water and sewer utility fund program, which was still a work in progress.

Mr. Rose concluded by inviting any questions regarding the funding or investment earnings they had discussed, stating that Ben Wilson would also speak on several topics—potential funding opportunities and investments with the state that yield the best possible returns.

Mr. Ben Wilson stated that Mr. Wilson started by mentioning that they regularly review all of the City's outstanding debt to identify refinancing opportunities. He pointed out that this year, they had identified the 2013 Virginia Resources Authority loan as a potential candidate for refinancing. Mr. Wilson explained that they could roll this loan into the $50 million borrowing planned for the fall.

Mr. Wilson elaborated that the bonds, totaling about $1.5 million and currently bearing an average interest rate of 5%, would be replaced with new bonds issued this year. He emphasized that they would not extend the maturity of these bonds and would lower the interest rate to just under 3%. He said that this refinancing would yield approximately $150,000 in savings and assured that the resolution adopted by Council would set parameters for the refinancing, ensuring that it would only proceed if the rate was favorable.

Mr. Wilson then discussed the general fund and bond proceeds earnings, which are currently earning in excess of 4%. Mr. Wilson mentioned that this elevated rate had been consistent for the last two years. He added that the City was moving towards a comprehensive plan for investment, with good progress made so far.

Mr. Rose invited questions from Council members regarding the refunding or earnings. He reminded everyone that recommendations for investment policies for the utility fund were expected by early January. He assured them that they were already working on this and would provide a schedule shortly.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if the timeline for a comprehensive investment plan for the City was January.

Mr. Rose responded that it had not changed since he was last before the Council, and Davenport would be working with the City's consultants and staff on the utility side. He said that they would convene sometime in January. He noted that in the short run, a lot of those monies are with LGIP and were doing very well—earning north of 5% and being maximized.

He stated that he would make recommendations such as funding for major capital projects, particularly utilities, and wanted to make sure they had ample dollars in their reserves and that those reserves were invested strategically. He stated that it's an iterative process, working with a variety of players, including utility staff, the City Manager, the Finance department, and the Raftelis outside consultants.

Council Member Cuthbert suggested penciling in a report from Davenport at their business meeting in January 2025.

Mr. Altman said that's what they already have within the schedule that Mr. Rose is going to present and clarified that the comprehensive plan for investing was only on the water and sewer side.

Council Member Cuthbert said that the City had been awarded a $30 million loan and a grant covering 30% of a new elementary school's cost. He said that this award was secure and noted the importance of moving from discussion to action.

Mr. Altman said there was a new Superintendent who was eager to proceed, and that a construction committee was in place. He said that significant turnover had occurred in the School Board, but efforts to advance plans would continue. Mr. Altman said the state DOE assured them the grant was secure with no expiration and agreed to report progress at the October business meeting.

Council Member Cuthbert said that he would appreciate monthly updates, as it was crucial to keep the community informed and engaged in the process, and he would like the public to be informed of any delays or obstacles.

Council Member Jones said that as of October 2023, the average cost to build a school ran from several million to $50 million, and now they have a $30 million loan. He asked how safe that loan was.

Mr. Altman responded that the dollars are set aside for the City—the $30 million plus the 30%—so they have a total of about $45 million available to build with.

Council Member Jones said that they have not had a school built in about 50 years, and his fear is that they may not have the same Council seated when it's time to move forward. He said that they needed to nudge the school system to move forward soon.

Mr. Altman agreed, stating that the new Superintendent was engaged now and needed to pick this back up. He said that if she needed City staff to start doing some of that, they would be more than happy to do so, but they needed the schools' full cooperation and participation.

Mr. Rose stated that the 2% literary loan was a guaranteed 2% for up to 30 years. He explained that accessing the funds requires specific steps, emphasizing that the schools need to be co-leaders in the process. He mentioned that preliminary tasks such as drawings and site preparation must be completed before accessing the 2% money. Mr. Rose warned that starting construction prematurely could jeopardize the funding. He clarified that the funds are split between a grant and a loan, which complement rather than compete with each other. Mr. Rose assured Council that the general fund projects do not compete with the school projects, but synchronization is key. He stressed the importance of the school officials' commitment to moving the project forward. He expressed eagerness to proceed if the full Council supports it, comparing the collaborative effort to keeping a train moving.

Mr. Altman explained that their strategy involved using grant funding to cover the costs of architectural and engineering work, which would then allow access to the $30 million, 2% loan for construction. By using the grant money first, he said, they could minimize the need for additional construction funds.

Council Member Jones asked if funds could be set aside to start a community fund for the school, stating that this isn’t just a City Council or School Board issue but a community effort. He asked if they could have a fund where the community could contribute.

Mr. Rose emphasized that the Council needs to understand the intricacies of setting aside funds, warning that it could risk losing both grant and loan monies. He suggested that Mr. Altman consult with the School Board and Superintendent before making any commitments. Rose proposed involving the Department of Education to discuss potential timing and funding, stressing the importance of careful planning in making resolutions. He assured the Council that they would return with a comprehensive plan, possibly taking longer than initially anticipated, to ensure all aspects are covered.

Vice Mayor Hill reflected on the transformation since 2016, when the City struggled with poor credit ratings and difficult decisions. He noted that the credit rating had improved significantly, from a double B to an A-plus rating, thanks to sound advice and solid actions. Vice Mayor Hill suggested that a meeting with the new Superintendent, the School Board, and the City Council, alongside financial advisors, could help lay out a comprehensive plan for the public.

Council Member Westbrook inquired about the collaboration between the treasurer, the commissioner of revenue, and other entities in efforts to improve Petersburg's bond rating. He noted that while there was a partnership in place, the report did not highlight their contributions or how they are collectively working to uplift Petersburg.

Mr. Rose expressed his appreciation for the positive and helpful contributions of the committee members. He noted that the committee meetings have been supportive, and this collaboration is moving everyone in the right direction.

He also pointed out that the City's improved credit ratings now allow for refinancing opportunities with lower interest rates, which wouldn't have been possible in previous years due to poor credit. This progress highlights the importance of maintaining strong financial policies and reserves to weather future economic downturns.

Mr. Rose praised the new treasurer, commissioner, and City Manager, emphasizing their incredible efforts and support from the staff. He conveyed optimism for Petersburg's future and the importance of meeting and exceeding financial policies to prepare for inevitable recessionary periods.

Finally, he reassured the Council that the City now has sufficient reserves and a financial cushion to handle potential challenges, expressing confidence in their ability to maintain their positive trajectory.

Mr. Rose said that evolving best practices in Virginia requires every local government with at least 3,000 residents to conduct an independent, annual, comprehensive financial review, which is essentially an audit. He explained that this audit is due to the Commonwealth around January 1, about 180 days after the fiscal year ends on June 30. He noted that when Mr. Altman began his tenure, Petersburg was behind schedule, but now significant progress has been made.

Mr. Rose said that the 2024 audit, due January 1, 2025, should be on time, showcasing continued progress. He mentioned that bank reconciliations, previously handled by outside contractors, have now been brought in-house, contributing to this improvement. He emphasized that resolving these material weaknesses is crucial for the City's financial health. He explained that the general fund has self-imposed policies, such as maintaining an unassigned fund balance of at least 35% of the budget. He highlighted that at the end of the audited fiscal year of 2023, the City had an unassigned fund balance of roughly $42 million, well above the policy requirement and generating considerable interest earnings.

Mr. Rose said that Petersburg's debt levels are under 2% of the assessed value, which is less than half of what the policy allows, indicating strong borrowing capacity. He noted that the City spends less than 4 cents of every dollar on debt service, which is well below the policy's 10% limit. He added that the City's fixed cost ratio, which includes debt levels, pensions, and other post-employment benefits, is in excellent shape, further demonstrating financial stability.

He mentioned that the goal is to finalize the utility study by December and present preliminary information in January. Mr. Rose said that the plan is to go to the rating agencies in November and enter the marketplace by the end of the calendar year. He highlighted that achieving solid A plus ratings and completing the refunding parameters by October would be significant milestones.

Mr. Rose concluded by saying he's happy to answer any questions and thanked the participants for their attention.

Vice Mayor Hill asked Mr. Altman if they would be on time for the audit in 2025.

Mr. Altman responded that they were on target for a January audit.

Council Member Westbrook asked if the date in November they were going to the agencies to request the bond rating would be affected at all by the audit.

Mr. Rose replied that in an audit, material weaknesses such as slowness in bank reconciliations and other issues might be identified. However, he said, unless these issues affect the City's cash flow, they are not considered critical. He noted that back in 2016, there was a significant impact due to the infamous picture of uncashed checks in a drawer, showing problems like non-billing, double billing, and not investing dollars properly—and these issues did indeed affect the City's financial health.

Mr. Altman said the constitutional officers involved in the process, along with the finance staff, have been diligent in addressing issues as they arise. He said the commissioner of revenue has been particularly proactive in this regard. Mr. Altman noted that the finance committee is working effectively together, and some positive outcomes are evident from the recent report. He said the finance staff has begun to address audit findings proactively by collaborating with relevant departments. He expressed the hope that next year, the City will improve its financial rating from A to double A, with the ultimate goal of achieving triple A status. He said that while there are long-term efforts needed to enhance the community's financial standing, current indicators by Fitch suggest that the City is on the right track.

Council Member Jones inquired about the 10-year PL principle and the implications of paying off debts sooner. He questioned how early repayment would benefit the City, noting their AAA rating and the potential positive impact on the City's financial standing.

Mr. Rose responded by explaining the analogy of a 30-year mortgage for a homeowner, where typically only about 25% of the principal is paid off after 10 years. In contrast, he said, local governments aim to have 50% of their debt paid off within the same period, thus positioning themselves better for future borrowing. He stated that unlike individuals, cities are perpetual entities with ongoing needs such as schools and infrastructure, which necessitates a strong financial position. He said that until 2016, the City had minimal outstanding debt due to a lack of investment; the current strategy involves reinvesting in various City assets, including schools, courthouses, and police stations, while maintaining responsible financial ratios. He emphasized that there are no early payoff penalties in this context, unlike individual financial agreements.

Mayor Parham asked what caused the City's past financial difficulties.

Mr. Rose explained that the City's primary issue was its expenditures significantly exceeding its revenues. He used a simple analogy, comparing the situation to having $1,000 in monthly expenses but only bringing in $900 in income; this imbalance mirrored the City's financial struggles, leading to greater debt each year. Mr. Rose elaborated that the City's fund balance, which had once been positive, was continuously depleted by using one-time monies to cover recurring expenditures. He observed this troubling pattern as far back as 2012. He was clear that the problem wasn't related to debt levels, as the City wasn't drowning in debt or debt service during that period.

He further explained that addressing credit concerns was essential, citing the late audit as a key issue for Fitch. With an in-house reconciliation process now in place, he said, the aim was to complete it on time, thereby improving their position. He stated that during the previous rating process for debt issuance, socioeconomics, particularly median household income, had significantly affected their bond ratings. He said that while their financial aspects earned high marks, the socioeconomic factors, graded at a B pulled their overall rating down. He noted that there was cautious optimism about future ratings improvements, with aspirations to elevate the City's rating to a double-A and eventually a triple-A, and this would require consistent efforts to enhance socioeconomic conditions within the community.

7. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION POSTED:

Mayor Parham stated that responses are found under Council Communicates.

8. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (TO INCLUDE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS):

a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:
- July 2, 2024 City Council Work Session
- July 15, 2024 City Council Special Meeting

Council Member Myers made a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

9. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. A Public Hearing for Consideration of the Carryover of Funds from FY24 for Approved Projects to FY25

Budget Manager Garry Cozier stated that these carryover funds were for projects or purchases encumbered in FY24 but not completed in that year. He said that their financial system does not allow for automatic carry forward of encumbered balances, so this is special consideration to carryover funds to complete them in FY25.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. There being no public speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Hill motioned to approve the carrying over the funds from FY24 to FY25 for the approved projects.

Council Member Westbrook seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

b. A Public Hearing for Consideration of Acceptance & Appropriation of the FY25 Victim Witness Grant

Budget Manager Garry Cozier stated that this item is for the City's yearly allocation from state and federal government for the victim witness program, and the amount this year is $294,118 of the grant.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. There being no public speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Hill motioned to approve the FY25 victim witness grant.

Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of Acceptance & Appropriation of the FY25 Witness Protection Grant

Budget Manager Garry Cozier stated that this item is a public hearing or consideration of acceptance and appropriation of the FY25 Community Corrections and Pretrial Services Grant, and the cost and allocation of this grant is $25,000.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. There being no public speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Hill motioned to approve acceptance and appropriation of the FY25 witness protection grant.

Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

d. A Public Hearing for Consideration of Acceptance & Appropriation of the FY25 Community Corrections & Pretrial Services Grant

Budget Manager Garry Cozier stated that this item is for consideration of acceptance and appropriation of the FY25 community corrections and pre-trial services grant. He said that this is another yearly allocation for our community corrections department for community corrections and pre-trial services, and the grant amount is $565,014.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. There being no public speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Hill motioned to approve the FY25 victim witness grant.

Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

e. A Public Hearing for Consideration of Acceptance & Appropriation of Funding from Virginia Department of Fire Programs - Aid to Localities (ATL) for FY25

Budget Manager Garry Cozier stated that this item is for acceptance and appropriation of funding from Virginia Department of Fire programs, aid to localities for FY25. He said that this comes through the fire department, and the Virginia Department of Fire programs provides aid to localities in Virginia each year, and the amount for this year is $150,643.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. There being no public speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Hill motioned to accept and appropriate funding for the aid to localities for the fire department.

Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

f. A Public Hearing for a Proposed Closing to Public Use & Travel of a City Street and Right-of-Way Off of Cottonwood Drive (Pecan Street) and Juniper Road Between Cottonwood Drive and Juniper Road Within the Petersburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

City Engineer Brian Coppell stated that this is a request to vacate a portion of the City right-of-way to facilitate the development of Pecan Acres, phase two. He said this will eliminate a portion of Pecan Street and a portion of Juniper Street and allow for the extension of Cottonwood Road to Fairgrounds Road as part of the development. He stated that public works recommend approval.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Sara Witiak, 22 Center Hill Court, requested that they make plans for trees and green space.

There being no further public speakers, the Mayor closed the public hearing.

Council Member Smith-Lee moved to approve the request to vacate the right-of-way as presented.

Council Member Jones offered a substitute motion to reflect an amount of $2,200.

Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

10. <u>PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD:</u>

Melissa Boyd, 2047 Warren Street, stated that she was here on behalf of a friend who lives at 90 Monument Avenue, Petersburg, and she expressed concern about trash being dumped in the woods.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, commented that 35 out of 38 cities in Virginia elect the mayor through Citywide elections, but Petersburg does not.

Melissa Witiak, 22 Centennial Court, thanked Council Member Cuthbert for holding a Ward 4 meeting, stating that she hoped there was some real information and a chance for citizen input. She expressed concern over the multiple closed sessions that City Council holds. She also stated her support for the road on Pocahontas Island and noted that in the event of a flood, she felt certain that residents of Pocahontas would allow trucks to pass through the old road if the new road was flooded.

Karen Weich, 737 Sapony Street, said she was speaking in support of South Central Wastewater Management’s proposal to extend Pocahontas Street through the Roper site.

Amanda Wyatt, 224 Witte Street, said that it’s time for a resolution regarding trucks on Pocahontas Island.

Marlo Green, 301 Ralph Street, stated that the upcoming treatment plan upgrade would significantly impact the traffic in the neighborhood, and there are roughly about 15 to 20 trucks currently. She said the existing roads cannot handle the weight capacity of the heavy trucks and tractor-trailers, along with an inconvenience to residents trying to enter and exit their homes. She said that the solution is a new road. Ms. Green also expressed concern that Petersburg is one of only three cities in the Commonwealth that appoints a mayor rather than elects one.

Karen Stevens, 226 Ruff Street, expressed her frustration with the trucks near the trail at Pocahontas Island, as people come here and live here to enjoy the natural ecosystem.

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

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he would be having a Ward 4 meeting at the YMCA on September 23, and one of the topics would be plans for the new courthouse, including its design. He said they would also discuss how the City can improve its parking lot cleaning efforts and speeding along the 1600–1800 blocks of South Crater Road. He also presented a picture of 135 Terrace Avenue showing a pile of rubbish and debris, and his concern was that City employees have been driving by that for several years but have never mentioned it as being a problem—which he considered a version of “See something, say something.”

Council Member Cuthbert expressed concern about the billing and collections process, as the public is irritated and he himself had received duplicate real estate bills for the same parcel of property. He said that this is a bad look for the City, and failure to update addresses for utility and real estate bills is also a problem. He asked Mr. Altman specifically to look into this.

Lastly, he mentioned the property at 6 South Old Kirk Street, as it has been blighted for at least 18 months and is a real drag on the neighborhood.

Council Member Jones recognized Planning Director Naomi Siodmok, noting that he had received about five emails just this week on her professionalism and customer service. He also recognized Leonard Muse, who donated a saxophone and trumpet for his marching band project, as well as Mr. Wesson, Tony Mayfield, and Gary Talley for contributing so that he could buy drums for the band.

He also mentioned meeting Keelan Graves and Messiah Scott, both of whom are now employed in the City Manager’s office and learning the different operations of municipal government. He also recognized the police chief and fire chief, who were in attendance at every meeting, and echoed the “See something, say something” mantra to help with public safety. He also recognized the Parks & Rec department and the City Clerk, who is “on point with everything.” He added his thanks to the public for being patient with City Council.

Council Member Westbrook thanked Parks & Rec for their efforts in getting people involved with pickleball, and he asked that citizens be good stewards as they brought kayaks and canoes on the Appomattox River. He asked the City Manager to provide an update on the Capitol Trailway line, and for staff to look into the feasibility of increasing the lighting on Elm Street.

Council Member Myers commented that he did not “get high” and that Council has important business to do, so those rumors are not true.

Council Member Smith-Lee recognized Amy [?], who was instrumental in the blackout at Petersburg High School to show school spirit. She also mentioned a softball tournament with young girls playing at the sports complex, and she noted that the field looked great.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that he had visited Virginia State University to talk to students about early voting and getting out the vote. He also said that the City takes a lot of blows, and they all need to speak well about Petersburg as much as they can.

Mayor Parham thanked all members of Council for their work and mentioned that they had done a great job representing the City in the Blanford parade. He mentioned Sheriff Crawford’s reentry program and an incarcerated individual, Dwayne Brewster, who came out and started driving trucks and now owned his own trucking company.

Mayor Parham also mentioned Petersburg's unique government structure, but also noted that of 38 cities in Virginia, 16 of them have Councils that appoint their mayor. He commended City Council and staff for the hard work they've put in to address issues and make improvements, as recognized tonight by Davenport. He added that they are going to keep pushing forward.

12. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

13. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Extension of Pocahontas Street through the Roper site

Mr. Cuthbert stated that he is asking Council to adopt a resolution for the extension of Pocahontas Street through the Roper site, and he read the proclamation into the record. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Marlo Green, 301 Ralph Street, urged Council to push this resolution forward.

There being no further public comment, the Mayor closed the public hearing.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A

Mayor Parham asked if the road would be built before the renovations to the treatment plant zone took place.

Mr. Altman responded that the road would likely be built toward the end of the project, but he would speak with Mr. Wilson about the timing.

15. NEW BUSINESS

a. Resolution Requesting Council Approval for the Selection of Gilbane Building Company and Proceed to Detailed Review for the Construction of the New Petersburg Courthouse

b. Consideration of Re/Appointment to the Petersburg Arts Council

c. Consideration of Re/Appointment to the Community Development Block Grant Citizen Advisory Board

d. Consideration of Re/Appointment to the Planning Commission

e. Consideration of Re/Appointment to the Petersburg Redevelopment Housing Authority

Mayor Parham commented that these items had been stricken from tonight's agenda.

16. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS

Mr. Altman stated that this is a resolution requesting Council approval to move forward with the selection of Gilbane Building Company for a detailed review of the construction of the new courthouse. He explained that the initial proposal from Gilbane, along with two competing proposals, had been reviewed by a committee he directed to be established. He said that this committee included Public Works, the Planning Director, and the Finance team.

He mentioned that the proposals from Branch Construction with Dewberry Engineering and Kenbridge Construction with Antares were also reviewed. He said that Gilbane's proposal scored significantly higher, making it the top choice. Mr. Altman emphasized that the request for approval that night was just a step in the process; the design was not yet finalized, and further steps would be brought back to the Council in October. He stressed the importance of this approval to allow the process with Gilbane to move forward.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why Gilbane was considered the preferred developer.

Mr. Altman responded that he had delegated that task, and the review team felt Gilbane's proposal was more complete and compelling than those from competitors.

City Engineer Brian Coppell explained that part of the PPEA process involves establishing evaluation criteria for selecting unsolicited proposals. He mentioned that under the City Manager's direction, a working committee was formed, which included himself, Public Works Director Byerly, Leon Glaster, and Jamie Fagan. He noted that the committee randomly evaluated each proposal, with criteria weighted accordingly, considering factors like minority business use and project characteristics.

He clarified that this authorization did not commit the Council to any specific action but allowed them to move forward and obtain more detailed information related to the vendor. Mr. Coppell indicated that the Council would later vote on the proposed agreement provided by the vendor. He presented the evaluation criteria, which included qualifications, experience, design team capabilities, and project financing, noting that the City planned to self-finance the project. He also mentioned the importance of project benefits, compatibility, community benefits, and support in the decision-making process.

He emphasized that each reviewed proposal was robust, making the decision difficult. Mr. Coppell stated that the competing contractors and development teams provided comprehensive narratives. He affirmed that the PPEA process was followed meticulously during the evaluation. He reiterated that these factors were considered seriously by the work team.

Vice Mayor Hill motioned to approve the resolution as presented.

Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

The motion passed on a roll call vote.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK

Tangi Hill, City Clerk, reported that Petersburg City Council would hold a special meeting on July 30, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. She also reminded Council that they would not hold their regular meeting nor their work session in August, and their next meeting would be September 2.

18. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, said that he had no report this evening.

19. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Parham made a motion to adjourn. All members of the Council present voted in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned.

The City Council adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Adopted: 02/18/2025

APPROVED:

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk