MINUTES
City Council
Special Called Meeting
September 8, 2020

Members Present: Bert Lance-Stone, Mayor; Roger Blackwell, Mayor Pro Tem; Council Members: Lewis Dorsett, John Glass, Robert (Trey) Gray, Larry Warlick, and Tim Williams.

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Zeb Holden, City Manager; Beth Koonce, City Attorney, and Susan Swaim, City Clerk.

Media Present: None

Item 1. Call to Order.

Mayor Stone called the meeting to order.

Item 2. Consider a Short-Term CARES Act Funded COVID-19 Utility Assistance Program.

Zeb Holden, City Manager addressed Council on this item. Manager Holden thanked Council for convening tonight to discuss this issue. He shared that much research and discussion has taken place to create a COVID-19 Utility Assistance Program which, if approved, will be made available for customers whom have fallen behind in their utility bill payments due to causes related to the pandemic.

Manager Holden reviewed with Council the proposed program, qualifications, application process, and associated changes to the Customer Service Policy. He provided examples of how the program will work using various circumstances. Manager Holden shared that CARES Act funds for this program are available only through December 2020, therefore there will be only 4 months in which eligible applicants may apply for and receive assistance. He shared that a list of agencies will also be provided to customers which provides recommendations for possible additional financial assistance.

Manager Holden outlined eligibility qualifications to be met for participation in this program. He stated that he is waiting on clarification from the State Pandemic Recovery Office (PRO) regarding the qualification that utility customers must live within the corporate City limits given that some customers live outside of the City limits. Manager Holden advised that the State and Federal government have acknowledged that self-certification of application information will be sufficient for participation in this program. He further advised that after City staff approve the applications, a request will

be made to Randolph County for payment of funds. Manager Holden shared that Randolph County will review all applications submitted by the City and is ultimately responsible for the distribution of CARES Act funds.

Manager Holden asked that Council consider approving the COVID-19 Utility Assistance Program for all eligible customers and also approve changes to the Utility Customer Service Policy associated with providing required alternate payment programs.

After further discussion regarding income qualification for participation in the program, it was determined that clarification was needed on the application stating that the annual household income qualification limit should be calculated prior to any COVID-19 impact (i.e. based on 2019 tax returns).

With no further discussion, Mayor Pro Blackwell made a motion to approve the implementation of the COVID-19 Utility Assistance Plan as presented adding clarification regarding calculation of household income qualifications and to adopt the associated recommended changes to the Utility Customer Service Policy. The motion was seconded by Councilman Dorsett and was approved unanimously.

Item 3. Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4) to Discuss Matters Relating to the Location or Expansion of Business in the Area Served by this body.

Councilman Warlick made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of business in the area served by this body. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Blackwell and was approved unanimously.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackwell made a motion to return to open session. The motion was seconded by Councilman Warlick and was approved unanimously.

Mayor Stone stated that no action was taken.

4. Adjournment.

With no further business, Mayor Stone adjourned the September 8, 2020 Special Called meeting.

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Bert Lance-Stone, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Susan T. Swaim, City Clerk