

# City Council Meeting MINUTES

**Monday, October 12, 2020, 6:30 PM**

Community Room, Salem Civic Center, 1001 Roanoke Boulevard, Salem, Virginia  
24153

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## 1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Salem, Virginia, was called to order at 6:30 p.m., there being present all the members to wit: Renee F. Turk, Mayor, James W. Wallace, III, Vice-Mayor, Council members: Byron Randolph Foley, William D. Jones, and John E. Saunders; with Renee F. Turk, Mayor, presiding; together with James E. Taliaferro, II, City Manager; Rob Light, Assistant City Manager and Clerk of Council; Rosemarie B. Jordan, Director of Finance; Charles E. VanAllman, Jr., Community Development Director; Mike Stevens, Communications Director; and Crystal L. Williams, Assistant to the City Manager.

## 2. Pledge of Allegiance

## 3. Consent Agenda

### A. **Citizens' Comments**

Comments from the public, limited to five minutes, on matters not on the regular meeting agenda.(Name, address, and topic are required.)

There were no citizens to speak at this meeting of City Council.

### B. **Minutes**

Consider acceptance of the minutes from the September 28, 2020, regular meeting.

Accepted

## 4. Old Business

## 5. New Business

### A. **Salem City School Board**

Hold a public hearing and receive views of citizens and candidates regarding the appointment to fill the expiring term for David Preston (as advertised in the October 1, 2020, issue of the *Salem Times Register*.)

Mayor Turk opened the public hearing and asked for the candidates to come forward who would like to speak on this matter.

David Preston, 1511 Ashley Drive, Salem appeared before Council and stated he was seeking reappointment to the Salem City School Board. Salem is not just a place where he calls home. He was born and raised in Salem. He discussed several experiences from his time in Salem schools. He further commented on some of the challenges, achievements and goals for Salem City Schools. He stated that he has served on the Board for the past 12 years and is proud to be a part of a Board that focuses on our children and getting the best education possible for our children. He looks forward to meeting the current challenges while seeing great results continue. He noted that working with City Council has never been more important to ensure that the Salem City Division honors its mission to love, engage and inspire every student to meet his or her full potential. He thanked City Council for the opportunity to serve the City of Salem.

Mayor Turk noted the City of Salem and Council appreciate Mr. Preston's hard work, dedication and commitment to Salem City Schools. She thanked him for his comments.

Joshua Kier, 209 Emmett Avenue, Salem, appeared before Council asking for consideration to become a member of the school board. He noted that he could speak in agreement and disagreement with everything that Mr. Preston had said; however, he has in the past shared data from the State, but he does not feel that tonight is the time or the place. He stated he would be more than happy to share that data if they wanted it. As some of Council may know, he is a teacher, and he has spent the better part of the last three years trying to find a way to serve his City on a teacher's schedule and that has proved difficult. He stated the citizens of Salem have shown a desire for leadership change as was demonstrated by the recent Council election. He believes this implies a general frustration by the voters about the current state of our city, and since Council appoints the school board members, he thinks they should seek to reflect the voters of our City by seeking new faces for the board. He further discussed the reasons why he should be considered for the Salem School Board. He thanked City Council for the opportunity to speak.

Mayor Turk thanked Mr. Kier for his comments.

Mayor Turk noted there was a third candidate for the Board who was unable to attend due to health reasons. That candidate is Robin Ott. The Clerk of Council read the following comments into the record from Robin Ott:

Good evening Mayor Turk, Vice Mayor Wallace, Mr. Jones, Mr. Saunders, and Mr. Foley. Thank you so much for having me this evening and for taking the time to listen to my thoughts about why I want to run for the Salem City School Board.

Tonight, I am going to share with you a little bit about my personal and professional experiences and how they connect with my desire to serve in this capacity as a school board representative. In my life, I have three main titles: mom, engineer, and professor. First and foremost, I am a mom to two amazing kids (well they're young adults now). My son and daughter are both Salem High School graduates. When they were young, I made a conscious decision to move to Salem specifically because they had the best schools in the area, and I wanted what was best for my children. I am known to be a fierce lover and protector of my children, and I can promise you that I will do the same for the students in Salem City Schools because they deserve the best education. Second, I am an engineer. I worked for 20 years in the engineering and manufacturing industry, and understand what it takes to run a business. During my career, I managed multi-million dollar projects for large customers so I am familiar with making budget decisions and understand financial statements. As a career engineer, I am a problem-solver by nature. When I look at something, I don't just see what is wrong. I start immediately thinking about how to fix it. Add to this that I am a female in a male-dominated industry, and you have a recipe for a woman who is confident in tackling big issues regardless of the obstacles. Salem needs a problem-solver to help tackle issues our school system faces, and I am ready to take on that role. Third, I am a professor. While my role is in higher education, I absolutely understand how to balance the needs of many students. I average over 400 students in my course. Due to my class size and the number of industry partners and other educators I work with, I am well-versed in understanding and pushing for positive morale amongst educators and stakeholders. I promise to keep all of the human dynamics in mind when making decisions for the school system because positive morale can go a long way in fostering a good school system. Finally, I'd like to add one more title to my resume: school board representative. My personal and professional experiences have prepared me for this role, and I would love to join a team of people to provide transparent, focused, and practical support to Salem City Schools' teachers and students. As a Hokie graduate and employee, I live by Virginia Tech's motto *Ut Prosim*, which means "that I may serve." These words—and more importantly, their inspiration—have been instilled in me from age eighteen on. That I may serve THIS school system would be a great honor. I thank you all for your time and attention, and I look forward to this opportunity!

Teresa Sizemore-Hernandez, 309 Orchard Street, Salem appeared before Council and stated she would like to be considered for the School Board. Several years she spoke before Council sharing her intent to serve on the board. Her intent has never changed; however, life events got in the way. She is back tonight to express her desire to serve the City on the board. She noted that Mr. Preston and the current School Board are doing a phenomenal job. Her intent is only to seek an appointment if Council chooses not to reappoint someone or if there is a vacancy in the future. She further discussed her background, family, professional experience, and qualifications. She noted all of her children have attended or are attending

Salem schools so she is familiar with the school system. She feels her wide range of knowledge will serve the City well, and she would like to use her skills to be able to give back to the schools.

Sally Southard of 118 Par Drive, former Chairperson of the Salem School Board, appeared before the Council. She noted that she is here in support of the reappointment of David Preston to the board. She noted that Mr. Preston was chosen by his fellow school board members to serve as chairman when she retired from the Board 6 1/2 years ago. Since then, he has successfully led the school division through some difficult economic times. She further discussed the reasons for reappointing David Preston to the Salem School Board and asked Council to reappoint Mr. Preston.

Cindy Neathawk, 3074 Bentrige Lane, Salem, appeared before the Council. She noted that she is here in support of the reappointment of David Preston. She served on the Salem School Board for 15 years and was fortunate to work with David for 4 1/2 years. She can speak from personal experience about his excellent qualifications and his effectiveness as a true servant leader who is always ready to listen to concerns and ideas. She further discussed the school board during his leadership and the reasons why Council should reappoint Mr. Preston.

Macel Janoschka, 200 Bentwood Court, Salem, appeared before the Council. She noted that she was here two years ago as President of the Salem Council of PTAs to speak about the budget and the Salem Schools renovations. She is still the Council President, but she is here tonight as a parent. She is here in support of the reappointment of Chairman David Preston. She stated she does not know him personally, but she has seen him in action. She noted she had served as the parent rep on a committee that was considering cafeteria vendors several years ago and discussed Mr. Preston and his participation and leadership on this committee. She agrees that change can be positive, but change just for the sake of change is not going to be positive. She further discussed the reasons for reappointing David Preston to the Salem School Board.

Andrea Johnson, 2238 Maiden Lane SW, Roanoke, appeared before the Council. She noted she is the 2020 Virginia Teacher of the Year, and she is an English teacher and Department Chair at Salem High School. She stated that she has just recently passed the ambassadorship off to Anthony Swann, the 2021 Virginia Teacher of the Year, from Franklin County Schools. She thanked Salem City Schools, Salem School Board, Chairman Preston, Dr. Alan Seibert, Mr. Habeeb, and Salem City Council for the unwavering support this past year as she served in this important leadership position in the State of Virginia. She further discussed her experience in representing the State and Salem in this role. She noted that as hard as this year has been any time teachers in Salem are faced ... Her motto as Teacher of the Year is "those who can, do, those who love, teach". Never has this been more true than this

year. She looks forward to the ways that she can continue to support the School Board and Salem students as we learn new practices in our changing educational landscape.

Nathan Overstreet, 815 Scott Circle, and business owner at 2913 West Main Street, Salem, appeared before the Council. He noted that he is present in support of Josh Kier for the open position on the School Board. He stated there are three things that really stand out about Mr. Kier. First is his passion for education, second is his desire to participate in public service, and third is his love for the City of Salem. All these things make him an excellent candidate for the open position. He further discussed Mr. Kier's qualifications and reasons why Council should appoint him to the School Board.

Jim Soderberg, 57 Sawyer Drive, Salem, appeared before the Council. He stated he is present in support of Josh Kier's nomination for the School Board position. He noted that many years ago he and his wife sold their home in Roanoke to move to Salem. The reason for moving was the City of Salem Schools. He further discussed his three sons and their experiences in the Salem schools. He has a long history of interest in and following the Salem schools. Since 2008, he has been an instructor at Virginia Western Community College teaching courses in logic, philosophy and ethics. When he first started at Virginia Western, if he had a Salem High School graduate in one of his classes, he could count on that student being probably in the top 10% of his students. He is grateful for all that has been done for the students and some times hearing something we do not want to hear is important. In recent years he has had no Salem High School students in the top 10% of his classes. He further discussed Salem schools and noted that he believes we need to have a fresh perspective on the School Board as things have started to go off the rails. He does not know what it is but something has been happening that perhaps we are not aware of. He believes that Mr. Kier will bring that perspective with eyes that are much more open and respective to identify what is going on. Further, he read into the record a recent letter to the editor of the Wall Street Journal from a retired college university professor.

Mayor Turk asked if anyone else would like to speak on this matter. There was no response, and the public hearing was closed.

#### **B. 630 Union Street**

Authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement for the sale of a parcel known as 630 Union Street, Salem, Virginia, Tax Map #160-11-2, consisting of 1.4032 acres. (Public hearing was held on November 14, 2016.)

Mr. Taliaferro noted the public hearing for the sale of this property occurred almost four years ago. He noted since that time there has been some interest in the property.

Also, the company who was interested wanted to fill the property, and the fill would raise the property above the floodplain and make it much more useable. From the City's perspective, they were filling our property so they were making our property even better so we did not move or push the company on approving the contract. The City Council at the time in 2016 agreed to the sale of the property for \$100,000 with a few conditions. One was there is sewer line that crosses the property on the north side, and the purchasers have agreed to move this line at their own expense so there would be no fill on it. Additionally there are proffers on the potential uses for the property, which are mainly commercial type uses. There is also a condition on the facade of the property, which has to be brick or stone, and a condition regarding a parapet wall facing the Union Street side of the property.

William Jones motioned to approve the sale of the parcel known as 630 Union Street, Salem, Tax Map #160-11-2, consisting of 1.4032 acres. Randy Foley seconded the motion.

Mayor Turk asked if there were any changes or discussion regarding the sale of this property. Vice Mayor Wallace noted he would like to offer an amendment to the motion. He noted he would like the time for the development of the property be changed to three (3) years instead of five (5) years so we can dispose of an empty lot sooner.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Taliaferro if this would be acceptable to the purchasers. Mr. Taliaferro noted that staff is waiting to hear back from the buyer regarding this. If Council chooses to move forward with the three year condition, and this is not palatable to them, then staff can come back with an amendment.

Mr. Jones noted that he would amend his motion with the proposed change by Vice Mayor Wallace. Mr. Foley seconded the amended motion.

Vice Mayor Wallace noted for the public's information the City is selling this property at a significant discount because of the improvements that had to be made to this property before it could be developed which were completed at the purchaser's expense.

William Jones motioned to authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement for the sale of a parcel known as 630 Union Street, Salem, Virginia, Tax Map #160-11-2, consisting of 1.4032 acres with the condition the development of the property shall occur within three (3) years. Randy Foley seconded the motion.

Ayes: Foley, Jones, Saunders, Turk, Wallace

### **C. Appropriation of Funds**

Consider request to accept and appropriate State Homeland Security Program Grants. **Audit - Finance Committee**

Vice Mayor Wallace noted the Audit Finance Committee met this morning to discuss this request. The City has been awarded two State Homeland Security Grants totaling \$121,850. The SHSP Response Equipment grant funding of \$45,850 will be used to purchase foam equipment at a cost of \$17,910 and the remaining \$27,940 will be used to provide foam training for Fire Department personnel. The SHSP Special Ops Swift-Water/Flood Rescue Team grant funding of \$76,000 will be used to purchase swift water rescue equipment. No local match is required for either grant. The Committee reviewed the request and recommends accepting and appropriating the funding for the Homeland Security Program Grants.

James Wallace motioned to accept and appropriate the State Homeland Security Program Grants funding for the Fire Department in the amount of \$121,850. Randy Foley seconded the motion.

Ayes: Foley, Jones, Saunders, Turk, Wallace

#### **D. Appropriation of Funds**

Consider request to accept and appropriate the Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Grant. **Audit - Finance Committee**

Vice Mayor Wallace noted the Audit Finance Committee also discussed this request. The City has been awarded \$10,000 in federal Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Grant funds, which will be administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. No local match is required. The Police Department will use grant funds to purchase the One Solution Police 2 Citizen software program, which will allow citizens to submit non-emergency police reports. Having this program available will help the department better serve the community by allowing easier access for citizens to check the status of their reports, freeing up officers to respond to emergency calls for service and provide a safer, healthier way for officers to interact with victim and complainants while still providing investigative assistance. This software will provide an alternative for routine customer service that reduces officers' risk of exposure to coronavirus for non-emergency calls for service. The Committee reviewed the request and recommends accepting and appropriating the funding for the Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Grant.

James Wallace motioned to approve accepting and appropriating the Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Grant in the amount of \$10,000. Randy Foley seconded the motion.

Ayes: Foley, Jones, Saunders, Turk, Wallace

**E. Approval of Budget Transfer for CARES Act Funding**

Consider request to transfer budget for CARES Act Funding. **Audit - Finance Committee**

Vice Mayor Wallace noted this request was also discussed by the Audit Finance Committee. The City received CARES Act funding through the Coronavirus Relief Fund in the amount of \$4,414,830. The CARES Act requires that these funds only be used to cover expenses that: are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 and were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020 and ends on December 30, 2020. Any funds not spent by December 30, 2020 must be returned. The School Division purchased additional Chromebooks at a cost of \$360,000 to promote distance learning. The committee reviewed the request and recommends allocating \$360,000 of the City's share of CARES Act funding to help cover School Division purchases.

James Wallace motioned to approve allocating \$360,000 of the City's share of CARES Act funding to help cover School Division purchases. John Saunders seconded the motion.

Ayes: Foley, Jones, Saunders, Turk, Wallace

**F. Amendment to Administrative 2020 Calendar**

Consider request to amend the City of Salem 2020 Administrative Calendar.

Mr. Taliaferro noted that last fall City Council adopted the administrative calendar for the 2020 year. Staff is requesting Council consider amending the calendar and adding December 24th, Christmas Eve, as an additional holiday and that City offices be closed that day.

Randy Foley motioned to approve amending the 2020 Administrative Calendar by adding an additional holiday, December 24th, and that City offices be closed. William Jones seconded the motion.

Ayes: Foley, Jones, Saunders, Turk, Wallace

**6. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.