

The work session meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, July 5, 2022, at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 4:57 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present:

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

Absent: Council Member Treska Wilson-Smith

Present from City Council Administration:

Clerk of City Council Nykesha D. Lucas  
Interim City Manager Kenneth Miller  
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams

Council Member Myers stated, "I received a notice today. And I would like to say that from this day forward, that Mr. Lucas would like for you to refer, as an early wedding present, to your clerk as Mrs. Lucas."

**2. PRAYER:**

Mayor Parham stated, "At this time Council Member Hill will lead us in our opening prayer."

Council Member Hill led the council meeting in prayer.

Vice Mayor Smith-Lee stated, "I just want to say that I received a telephone call on Saturday. And it was like one of the saddest days I have had being on council. But I was told that Councilman Myers was there with the young lady who passed on. And I cannot imagine what you went through knowing that they had to put the sheet over that young lady and speaking to her parents. But I just appreciate you being there for her family. It is really sad. The young lady never even had a chance to grow and be my age. I just want to say thank you for Chief Travis and all of the surrounding areas that came in to help. One person of interest, they have arrested him, and they are working on the others."

Mayor Parham stated, "At this time, we will have a moment of silence. Thank you."

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor Parham led council and the citizens in the pledge of allegiance.

**4. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:**

A quorum is present. Council Member Wilson-Smith is absent.

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

a. Minutes:

- June 21, 2022 – Special Closed Session Meeting
- June 21, 2022 – Closed Session City Council Meeting

\*Audio available upon request.

- b. Consideration of an appropriation in the amount of \$4,321 from the Office of the Attorney General Crime Prevention for Seniors Grant Program – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading
- c. A request to schedule a public hearing for the consideration of an ordinance authorizing the city manager to execute a purchase agreement between the City of Petersburg and Terry and Cynthia Bradshaw towards the sale of City-owned property located at 2902 Nivram Road, parcel ID 080060011.
- d. A request to hold a public hearing for the consideration of the PY2022/FY2023 funding recommendations from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Board.

Mrs. Lucas stated, “There is one change that I received from Ms. Boone. For item 5c, the purchase price should be \$36,650 and not \$36,500.”

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

**6. SPECIAL REPORTS:**

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

**7. MONTHLY REPORTS:**

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

**8. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT:**

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

**9. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE:**

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

**10. UTILITIES:**

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

**11. STREETS:**

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

**12. FACILITIES:**

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

**13. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

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

\*Audio available upon request.

**14. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA:**

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

**15. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK:**

\*No items for this portion of the agenda.

**16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:**

\*No items for this portion of the agenda.

**17. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mt. Vernon, stated, "I didn't know I signed up. Did you just read my mind? There is one thing that I wanted to say briefly on the casino. Everybody's attention is there. It sounds like a great thing, and it made progress during the General Assembly. But I am looking at a timeline. It will come back before the General Assembly in 2023 and assuming that things go according to planned for what you all are looking to do, it will be a referendum on it in November of 2023. So, we are talking about something that is almost a year and a half away. So, what I have been doing is following the progress of the casino development in the other four cities that have them, Bristol, Danville, Norfolk, and Portsmouth. According to what I have read, three of those, Bristol, Norfolk and Danville, plan to open their casino with entertainment venue with the hotel, restaurants and so forth in spring of 2024. And Portsmouth is saying that they will be able to open theirs up a year early. But if you back up and say we take the three as predictive of what will happen, that is about three and a half years from the time of the referendum. So, if you have a referendum in November 2023, and the voters approve it and say yes, we want to have casino gaming in Petersburg, when it actually opens would possibly be in mid-2026. That is a pretty long way off. So, for those who were campaigning or talking about things now, certainly it is worth talking about, but I do not think it will be good to put all of our eggs in the basket with the casino when it is this far away. It can help us. But in the meantime, we have all kind of problems that need money and attention. So, please stay in the here and now. Thanks."

Michelle Murrills, 131 S. Market Street, stated, "I am here today to talk about the violence in our city that our city continues to endure. This past weekend, Old Towne was hit with violence at its very core. The beautiful Artist Lofts had a shooting take place in its very lobby, one block from my house. When we heard the gun shots, my daughter and I came down to a chaotic scene and immediately did what we could. We helped to get people in and out of the building as needed. My daughter and I also helped to direct traffic away from the scene so that the police could do their job. I know that was helpful, but we should not have been the only people out there letting everyone know what was going on and directing them away. This city can redirect traffic from flooding in an instance in the middle of a storm with our emergency alert system. I do not understand why we could not have used that same system to redirect the people away from the scene. It was the middle of the day and people were constantly coming back and not knowing what was going on. The police did not release the scene until after 8pm. Imagine not being allowed to go back into your house for several hours and you have nowhere to go in 100-degree heat and gas prices are as high as they are. You do not know if you will be allowed to sleep that night. There should have been an emergency shelter put in place for these people. The library would have been a good place for that. After all this beautiful space that tax dollars were wasted on should have been allowed for more than parties and city council meetings. This is now Old Towne, the gem of Petersburg where people are always hyping about being safe. Well, it's not and you all still shrug your shoulders. I said so in May and I said so in June and I am still saying so in July. And yes, Councilman Hill, I understand the meaning of if I point one finger at you and you will be pointing three fingers back at me. But that threat truly means nothing to me. You do not scare me and obviously the familiar ties that you continue to reference mean nothing either as these senseless shootings of teenagers continue. I lay the

\*Audio available upon request.

responsibility of this violence at your feet. You hold the purse strings, and you have the ability to give our police officers what they need to fight crime which they do not have now. You can fund a proper position to notify the public what is going on and you have the ability to put an emergency plan in place for things like this. Finally, there was a special Sunday service at Gillfield Baptist Church that was for the people that was affected by the shooting since it happened right across the street. You all should have been there. Senator Morrissey came and gave us some real words of encouragement. It really is too bad that the only official that seems to care about our city is the Senator who does not actually live here. Thank you.”

Aurora Murrills, 131 S. Market Street, stated, “As many of you know there was a fatal shooting last Saturday. It took two days for a single city official to even acknowledge it online. The city is very quick to announce when roads are closed due to flooding. But I do not understand why the same cannot be done when a shooting of this magnitude occurs. I was there three minutes after it happened. I live one block away and heard all that had happened. It was chaos and that chaos lasted for hours. It was Saturday afternoon and many that were coming home was confused by what was going on. Many were stuck because they did not know how to avoid the situation. I do not understand why a message was not sent out to avoid the area at all costs. I get that it was a chaotic situation, but it only takes five minutes to post something. Many had family inside and did not know what to do and whether they could get back into their apartments. It was a hot day, and many had nowhere to go. They were not able to get inside that night and many slept in their cars. If there was another event similar to this or even a natural disaster like the one that took out much of Old Towne, the city would be in disarray. We need an actual plan in place and a location for people to go to get help. We have used the bus station as a warming center and a cooling enter but for example two winters ago it took days for the bus center to open as a warming center. It was never open last winter. We have this brand-new library that we are standing in right now. We need an actual plan in place in case of an emergency. But what I don’t understand is why we don’t use city resources as a temporary shelter. Every place that I have every lived has homeless shelter or a location to house people in times of need. We are a disaster away from the whole city collapsing and that risk increases with every passing day. We need to create an actual plan for things like this and other disasters. Thank you.”

Mayor Parham stated, “Seeing no other hands, this public comment period is closed. At this time, I would like Councilman Myers to address the crowd. I know that you were there the whole time.”

Council Member Myers stated, “I really don’t want to address it. You know I sit here and listen to folks talk about how fast they were there. Howard Myers, Chasity, and Mikaela was right there on the scene. We could have been shot. We did not care. We wanted to do something with that young lady who had fallen. We were there. You were not. And so, yes, I saw you later on that day. But do not come in here and profess about what the City of Petersburg resource is doing for the police department. If you saw that scene like I saw it, I am very proud of my City of Petersburg Officers, the State Police and every other jurisdiction that came to help the City of Petersburg that day. No one can deny and dispute it. But there were more than 30 officers on the scene. I was there for five hours traumatized. I watched the young lady close here eyes. So, don’t tell me about me posting about a young lady who has lost her life on Facebook. It is the worst that I have ever seen. Thank you.”

Mayor Parham stated, “At this time going back to Mr. Miller. I know that we have our new public works director who is here today. Would you like to introduce him?”

Council Member Hill stated, “Can I have a point of privilege?”

Mayor Parham stated, “Right after Mr. Miller comments.”

Mr. Miller stated, “We have two people that I think that the community needs to see. Ms. Lakishah White, is our new director of human resources. She comes to us with a boat load of experience. And we have

\*Audio available upon request.

Mr. Paul Johnson. He is our new director of public works. He too comes to us with a boat load of experience. These two individuals are part of the key fiber in our city to move the city forward. I am just delighted to have these two people before you. Thank you both for coming on board.”

Council Member Hill stated, “I just want it to be said. Because I do not normally say anything when a person speaks at the mic. That is your time to speak. But when you call a name and you put my name out there, I have to address this. No way have I intimidated anybody. And this thing about pointing the finger and the three fingers pointing back. We all take responsibility for our city. I take my responsibility and I hope that everyone else takes their responsibility. We pray day in and day out for our city at all times. It is senseless for what is going on. It is not only in our city, but all cross our nation when it comes to this gun violence. And I would just hope that when a particular individual is running for office that you don’t try to get sound bites. We have real problems and real concerns. And I understand that if you were down there. But I am a pastor of a church, so on Sunday, I am in my pulpit. I know Reverend Lyons very well and you cannot be everywhere all the time. We have been going to prayer visuals and marching. We have done a whole for these last six, seven or eight years. So, just because you don’t see us at one event, we are represented. This man seen a young girl lose her life and that is why I prayed for that family and for him and the city. So, we have to be careful with our words, especially when you call an individual out. I would never say such and such name. Unless you are right, you are not right. So, I have never mentioned your name, so I would appreciate it if you don’t mention my name in that way. Especially when I have not done anything like that. I don’t intimidate anybody and that is not my way of counseling. I am the type of person that I am going to say something back if you call my name. But I would never say anything if you called in generality. And I still have not said you name, so I would appreciated if you keep my name out of your mouth. Thank you.”

**18. ADJOURNMENT:**

City Council adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of City Council

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\*Audio available upon request.