

**City of New Bern  
Board of Aldermen Work Session  
August 09, 2011  
City Hall Courtroom – 7:00 P.M.  
300 Pollock Street**

1. **Meeting opened by** Mayor Lee W. Bettis, Jr. **Prayer by** County Commissioner Johnnie Sampson, Jr.. Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Roll Call.** Aldermen Sabrina Bengel; Victor Taylor; Denny Bucher; Johnnie Ray Kinsey; Bernard White; and Dana Outlaw all present.

Also in Attendance: Mike Epperson, City Manager; and Scott Davis, City Attorney.

3. **Presentation of Service Certificates for Employees.**

Sonya Hayes, Director of Human Resources, stated the City was recognizing employees for their years of service during the period of January 2011 and June 2011. Service is recognized beginning at five years and at additional increments of five years. Those recognized were:

5 Years of Service:

Shelton C. Brown (Police)	John M. Paxton, III (Engineering)
James L. Ipock (Engineering)	Michael D. Phelan (Police)
Lionel D. Koonce (Finance)	Deidre L. Wrought (Finance)

10 Years of Service:

Janey Anderson (Planning & Insp.)	William C. Zerby (Police)
Steven M. Anderson (Finance)	

15 Years of Service:

Randy S. Gladson (Fire)	Tony L. Heckman (Fire)
Billy J. Bloomfield (Public Works)	Judy R. Majstoravich (Engin.)
Frederick Dickinson (Planning & Insp.)	

20 Years of Service:

Robert M. Boyd, Jr. (Fire)	Anthony D. Roberg (Fire)
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The following employees also received longevity awards, but were not present at the meeting:

5 Years of Service:

Bruce C. VanApeldoorn, Jr. (Engineering)	Ricky A. Campbell (Engineering)
Steven J. Willie (Engineering)	Grayling K. Wyrick (Engineering)
Brad T. Newman (Public Works)	

10 Years of Service:

Jerry D. Marshall (Engineering)  
Johnathan R. Gaskins (Fire)  
Jeffrey S. Fulcher (Parks & Rec.)

Jeanne E. Tyndall (Finance)  
Nicole J. Dewar (Parks & Rec.)  
Pamela Belrose (Public Works)

15 Years of Service:

Benjamin W. Gaskill, Jr. (Finance)  
David M. Kern (Public Works)

John F. Sadler (Fire)  
Lawrence Tillett (Public Works)

20 Years of Service:

Shannon P. Ellis (Engineering)

25 Years of Service:

Mary B. Muraglia (Finance)

Terry W. Gaskins (Fire)

A group picture was taken at the meeting of the employees with the Mayor and Board of Aldermen. Alderman White made a motion to recess for a reception honoring the employees, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously, time being 7:20p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:40p.m.

**4. Request and Petitions of Citizens.**

John Rossi of 122 Drury Lane stated the City desperately needs a baseball field with a grass infield. Not having the grass limits the types of tournaments New Bern can host. In July, the 13 and 14 year olds hosted the District 6 Tournament. In order for a state southeast regional tournament or a world series tournament to be hosted in New Bern for the 13-18 year olds, a grass field is a must. To host a tournament for the 15 year olds or higher, the fence would need to be moved back. Rossi presented plans outlining proposals for Cutler Field, which is the field located behind Kidsville. These proposed changes would meet Babe Ruth requirements for hosting tournaments and have been discussed with Thurman Hardison, Director of Parks and Recreation. Conservative estimates of the financial benefits to the City were also presented, with the estimate totaling \$150,000 spent on hotels, meals, etc. when a tournament is held in New Bern.

The league is willing to pay for the \$1,100 to sod the field. An adequate water source for irrigation is already in place behind the picture's mound. The league is seeking the Board's permission to move forward with the project.

Hardison informed the Board he endorsed the proposal. Mike Epperson, City Manager, suggested the City make an analysis of the improvements. He assumed the City would need to maintain any changes made, and the feasibility of that needed to be considered. Rossi stated this is the ideal time to lay sod, not only because conditions are suitable, but also because the playing season begins in mid September and sod cannot be played on for two weeks after installation.

Alderwoman Bengel expressed agreement that the City needed better fields and that it is losing economically as a result. The 10 and under southeast regional tournament was held at Creekside two weeks ago. The economic impact from that tournament was amazing. All the hotels were full, etc. She suggested Rossi contact the sports committee commissioned through the Tourism Development Authority to promote New Bern for any upcoming tournaments or events.

Alderman Taylor asked for confirmation that the cost of the changes would be borne by the league and any maintenance borne by the City. Alderman White stated when he was a youth, the league maintained the field. Rossi stated the league would be glad to assume responsibility for maintaining the field.

Alderman White also inquired about the need to move the fence. Rossi explained the movement of the fence is a long-term goal. New Bern could host a state tournament based on the current length of the fence. If a southeast regional or world series tournament were hosted, the fence would need to be moved back 20 feet. There is room to move the fence, but there are two obstructions. One is the scoreboard, which would need to be moved back 30 feet, and Rossi recommended relocating it more towards the center field. The league has volunteers and electricians willing to perform this work, which translates to no cost for the City.

Alderman Bucher asked why grass was a requirement. Rossi stated safety was part of the reason, but he did not know the full reasoning. However, this is a standard requirement. Alderman White stated grass made it easier for the players to see the ball.

Epperson stated the City would make a diligent analysis of the proposal and report the findings to the Board at next week's work session. If the Board is supportive of the findings, this can be approved administratively, as formal Board action is not required.

**5. Presentation by New Bern High School Interact Group.**

Mayor Bettis stated this is a group of students who traveled to India, after a group of Indian students had visited here. Deirdre Kiernan, English Teacher and Interact Advisor at New Bern High, explained Interact Group was a service community club for youth ages 12 to 18. The group is sponsored by the Rotary Club, and the point behind its existence is not only to provide service to the community, but to hopefully develop leadership skills. It is an international club, and the clubs are asked to perform a national and an international project.

New Bern's Interact Group participated in a polio eradication program in India, visited a Rotary international hospital for cancer and were involved in a blood drive. The students who participated in the trip provided a PowerPoint presentation discussing these programs and how they work, as well as gave an

overview of the history of India. They also came prepared with a slideshow of pictures from their trip. Those students included Dylan Simel, Dani Wind, Cassandra Smith and Elizabeth Graham.

Alderman Bucher stated he coached Simel in baseball and basketball, and that Simel just graduated salutatorian of his class. The Mayor congratulated him and thanked the group for providing the presentation. Alderwoman Bengel thanked the Rotary club for its guidance and leadership.

6. **Adopt Resolution Entering into Easement Agreement with Progress Energy for Utility Easement Located at Lewis Farm Road Substation Site.**

This item was pulled from the agenda.

7. **Adopt Resolution Approving Closing Roundtree Street Between Reizenstein Street and Bryant Drive from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 27, 2011, for Vision Forward Event.**

Epperson stated this is a typical request for a street closure to accommodate a worthwhile event, and staff has no concerns over the closure. Alderman Taylor explained the event is an informational awareness event for children to hear about various careers and be exposed to the idea of attending college. There will also be a car display on Roundtree, and White stated he had spoken with some residents on that street and they expressed no opposition to the closing. Alderman White made a motion to approve the closing of Roundtree Street between Reizenstein Street and Bryant Drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on August 27, 2011 for a Vision Forward event, seconded by Alderman Kinsey. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

8. **Adopt Resolution Approving Kale Road Parking License.**

Attorney Davis stated the Resolution approves a license agreement that would allow Born Again Ministries to use the parking lot of the property owned by the City on Kale Road as overflow parking. The specified times of use are for Sunday church services, Wednesday evening bible study and during special events. It is a week-to-week agreement that can be terminated by either party upon one week's written notice. Alderman Outlaw made a motion to approve the final adjustment change order with Insituform Technologies, Inc. for the northwest interceptor rehabilitation project, seconded by Alderman Bengel. Upon a roll-call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Alderman Taylor recognized Mr. and Mrs. Monroe who are from Born Again Ministries and who attended the meeting to show their support.

9. **Adopt Ordinance Amending Section 54-157 “Employee Residency Requirements” of Article V. “Recruitment and Employment” of Chapter 54 “Personnel” of the Code of Ordinances of the City of New Bern.**

Attorney Davis explained the purpose of the ordinance amendment is to allow a department head to live within an 8-mile radius of City Hall. It is felt with this 8-mile radius a department head could still meet the needs of any emergency which may occur and would be close enough to participate in other activities as a member of the community. In this economy, this step will facilitate attracting qualified department heads, specifically a Director of Finance. The City Manager would still be required to live within the city limits, and the preference would be for Department Heads to live within the city limits, but it would not be an obligation.

Epperson stated metropolitan areas provide a broader area for recruitment than the city. People who live within eight miles of New Bern consider New Bern their home. They shop and recreate in the City of New Bern. In essence, this amendment gives the City a “small metro” area from which to recruit. In researching the residency requirements other cities have for department heads, New Bern was “in the exception”.

Alderwoman Bengel stated it is truly difficult to sell a house in this economic environment, and for a candidate who lives within eight miles it would help ease some of the concerns associated with trying to sell a home to move into the city limits. Alderman White stated he was against the amendment, as he felt if anyone wanted to take a job as a department head they should want to live in New Bern. Mayor Bettis stated there has been a robust debate over this subject for approximately two months. The 8-mile radius is a closer radius than was initially discussed (10-12 mile radius). The City is trying to keep up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century and meet its hiring needs. Alderman Taylor questioned the six-month requirement to comply which is in the amended ordinance. Davis explained department heads would be given six months from the date of hire to either move within the city limits or move within 8 miles of city hall.

Alderman Bucher made a motion to approve the ordinance amending Section 54-157 “Employee Residency Requirements” of Article V, “Recruitment and Employment” of Chapter 54 “Personnel” of the Code of Ordinances of the City of New Bern, seconded by Alderman Bengel. Upon a roll-call vote, Aldermen Bengel, Taylor, Bucher and Mayor Bettis voted yes, and Aldermen Kinsey, White and Outlaw voted no. The motion passed 4-3.

10. **Approve Minutes.**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 14, 2011 meeting, seconded by Alderman Outlaw. The motion carried unanimously.

11. **Appointment(s).**

Alderman Bengel appointed Mr. Phil Uric of 103 Queen Street to the Board of Adjustments, seconded by Alderman Outlaw.

12. **Attorney's report.**

Attorney Davis reported on the gas prices, which were discussed at the previous Board meeting. The Attorney General does not have independent authority to perform an investigation without authority from the Governor. This does not preclude the City from lodging a complaint with the Attorney General, and in fact, several cities across the state have already done so. There are two large websites that track gas prices down to the city and county levels. One of the websites noted at the top of their page that prices in Craven County may vary anywhere from 20-30 cents per gallon. Davis noted pages for other counties also had the same notice, and he wasn't sure if that was the driving force for the concern. Davis stated it would be helpful if citizens would contact him when they note a large difference in price on one side of town compared to the other. He even encouraged citizens to submit pictures of advertised gas prices. He would then incorporate that information into the Resolution that would be sent to the Attorney General to substantiate the City's complaint. Those desiring to contact Davis may reach him at 252-514-2828 extension 3. However, the best way to contact him is through the City's website. Citizens may click on Davis' picture to send him an email with any pictures attached.

Alderman Bengel asked if citizens should also contact the Governor. Davis stated yes it would be helpful. Alderman Bucher stated he traveled to Asheville yesterday and noticed gas prices in Raleigh were almost identical to prices in New Bern, yet Asheville was 20 cents cheaper.

13. **City Manager's report.**

Epperson stated one of the City's goals in terms of improving its financial health was to make changes to the healthcare plan. A wellness program was instituted this year, with free healthcare screenings that began yesterday for all plan participants. The screenings will be conducted for three days. This is a voluntary program, and there has been a tremendous response with approximately 200 people signed up for free screenings.

At the last meeting, a discussion was held regarding concern over increased crime and violence in the City. The City reached out to members of the Blue Ribbon Commission in the Wilmington area, and they will make a short presentation at the work session scheduled for next Tuesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>. The Police Department has also increased visibility and patrol.

Epperson handed out a poster about a program the City has initiated called "Beat the Heat". This is basically extended hours at some of the City's facilities near

and around the Broad Street corridor. Stanley White Recreation Center has extended hours on Fridays, Saturdays, Mondays and Tuesdays until 1 a.m. The spray park, Kafer Park, and others have been extended as well. The first weekend there were 60-80 people who showed up to take part in the extended hours and alternative activities. It was a good weekend in terms of no violence. Any churches, civic groups, etc. who would like to open their facilities and partner with the City in this effort is welcome to participate. The City will take care of the publicity and make sure there is a police presence. This program will continue through the month of August.

Epperson introduced Diadra Powell, the newly hired Senior Management Assistant. Powell introduced herself stating she is from Kinston and worked for the City of Kinston for six years. She has a bachelor degree in chemistry and expects to have a masters in business with a minor in finance from ECU in December. She is married to a marine, and they have three children. Epperson stated Powell will coordinate a lot of projects, work on the agenda, and will immediately begin following up on council concerns.

#### 14. **Announcements.**

Alderman White stated he has spoken with Epperson about the high grass along the roadways and that it will be worked out with the Department of Transportation. In addition, he will be meeting with Mark Stephens, Director of Public Works, to look at the drains in his neighborhood. White spoke with him about some drainage issues brought to his attention by a citizen in another area of town, and those issues were resolved.

Alderman Kinsey stated Congressman G. K. Butterfield will be writing a Resolution to present before the General Assembly supporting the City in its attempt to lower electric rates. Kinsey stated the NC Black Elected Municipal Officials conference he attended last weekend with Aldermen White and Taylor focused on homelessness. He is waiting to receive additional information on the topic, which he will share with Epperson to discuss how it can benefit New Bern. Kinsey also thanked Thurman Hardison, Director of Public Works, for his involvement in National Night Out.

Alderman Taylor reminded everyone the Vision Forward event will be held at Craven Terrace on August 27 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. He invited everyone to attend. He also reminded everyone of the free prostate screening on September 24, 2011. Taylor stated the Duffyfield Community Watch had its program at the Stanley White Recreation Center on August 4<sup>th</sup>. A representative from the Governor's Gang Task Force was the guest speaker.

Alderman Bengel thanked everyone who volunteered and was involved in National Night Out, stating it was a great program. She thanked Bobby Aster, Fire Chief, for his work on the instant alert system and recommended all citizens go to the City's website to sign up for alerts. She also thanked the City

employees for the work they do, recognizing that many of them work outside in the extreme heat.

Bettis reminded everyone of the work session scheduled for August 16, 2011. The meeting is to discuss the revitalization of the Craven Terrace and Trent Court areas, as well as crime in those areas. Gangs are not welcome in New Bern. Bettis asked for Epperson to invite Joe George, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of New Bern, to the work session. Last year, a clean-up of Jack Smith Creek was discussed. The Mayor asked for an update on that project stating he would like to contact the Neuse Riverkeeper for help in putting this on the "fast track". Mike Avery, Director of Planning and Inspections, stated the property owner had been put on notice about a violation, and the owner responded in detail about visits he has had from the Division of Solid Waste and other state agencies questioning the wisdom of removing the material; it may produce more pollution through removal than by leaving it in place. The City has contacted the Division of Water Quality in Washington, NC to request their opinion on moving the waste and is waiting for their advice.

15. **Closed session.**

Alderman Bucher made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) for to discussion the City's intervention in the Progress Energy merger, NCGS 143-318.11(a)(5) to discuss real estate matters and NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) to discuss a personnel matter, seconded by Alderman Kinsey, time being 8:50 p.m.

16. **Adjourn.**

Alderman Bengel made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Outlaw. The motion carried unanimously, time being 10:05 p.m.

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Mayor

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City Clerk