

**City of New Bern
Board of Aldermen
Special Work Session
August 16, 2011
City Hall Courtroom 6:00 P.M.
300 Pollock Street**

Roll Call: Mayor Lee W. Bettis, Jr.; Aldermen Sabrina Bengel; Victor Taylor; Denny Bucher; Johnnie Ray Kinsey; Bernard White; and Dana Outlaw.

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

Alderman Bucher made a motion to go into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6) for personnel matters and real property issues under NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(5), seconded by Alderman Bucher. The motion carried unanimously, time being 6:05 p.m.

Alderman Bucher made a motion to go back into open session, seconded by Alderman Outlaw. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting reconvened at 6:25 p.m.

1. Appointment of the Director of Finance.

Alderman Outlaw stated he voted against amending Chapter 54, Section 54-157 Personnel of the Code of Ordinances of the City of New Bern. The majority of the board voted in support of amending the ordinance; therefore, it is a done deal. Alderman Outlaw prefers all department heads to live within the city limits. The applicant is qualified and has met all the requirements; therefore, he is in support of hiring him.

Alderman Bucher stated a lot of time and energy was spent on interviewing candidates, and Mr. Fiaschetti was clearly the strongest and most qualified candidate. He will be an outstanding addition to the staff of the city.

Alderman White stated he voted against amending Chapter 54, Section 54-157 Personnel of the Code of Ordinances of the City of New Bern. Alderman White further stated he is standing by his decision. He believes that Department Heads should live within the city limits and pay city taxes.

Alderman Kinsey stated he believes that Department Heads should live within the city limits and pay city taxes as well. He voted no on amending the personnel ordinance and respected the ordinance as previously written.

Alderman Bengel stated Mr. Fiaschetti has the ability, good skills, and talent to bring to the city. One of the city goals was to get the city finances in order, and

Mr. Fiaschetti has the ability to make the city financial sound again. She looks forward to working with Mr. Fiaschetti and the staff.

Mayor Bettis stated he is glad the board could debate stating we can agree or disagree and continue to work together.

Alderman Outlaw made a motion to appoint Keith Fiaschetti as the Director of Finance, seconded by Bengel. Upon a roll call vote, Mayor Bettis, Aldermen Bengel, Taylor, Bucher, and Outlaw voted "Yes", Aldermen Kinsey and White voted "No". The motion passed 5-2.

Keith Fiaschetti thanked the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen for appointing him as the Director of Finance. He is an eighteen (18) year resident of New Bern, and a returning employee of the City of New Bern having worked previously in the finance department. He holds a MBA in Finance with significant experience as a financial executive. He spent his last five and half (5 ½) years as Director of Finance for the City of Kinston.

Mayor Bettis read the oath of office to Mr. Fiaschetti, Director of Finance, effective September 6, 2011.

2. Presentation from New Hanover County Blue Ribbon Commission on the Prevention of Youth Violence.

Tufanna Thomas, Strategic Director of the Blue Ribbon Commission for Prevention of Youth Violence located in Wilmington, North Carolina presented a power point presentation to the board. The Blue Ribbon Commission started in 2006 because of an increase in drive-by shootings and gang violence. The commission consists of a number of organizations from the mayor, district attorney, CEOs and the faith-based community.

The mission of the Blue Ribbon Commission is to provide leadership, foster collaboration and develop resources for addressing youth violence. The commission vision is to provide a cohesive vision and comprehensive strategic plan; secure resources to sustain needed programs; overcome current fragmented programs by consolidating and streamlining communication and eliminating redundancy; and educating the community about the issue of youth violence. The commission consists of three teams: Education Action Team, Community Engagement Action Team and Youth Violence Team.

The Education Action Team is made up of representatives from New Hanover County School, Cape Fear Community College, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Smart Start, Council of PTAs, Easter Seals UCP, New Hanover County School Drop Out Prevention, and the community. These representatives work together on long-term objectives. Some of the long-term objectives are to assure that afterschool programs are effective (k-12); identify methods to provide

equitable access to resources outside of the school; teach parents the importance of participation early in the education process and at critical transitions; assure that the school culture is all inclusive; identify approaches to combat truancy; develop a specific analysis of the root causes of drop out; identify alternative education for youth that are not college bound; identify national “best practices” that are relevant to children’s needs; and ensure high quality standards for early care and education (0-5 years).

Community Engagement Action Team is chartered to enlist an army of more than 4,000 citizens from the community to be actively involved with the prevention of youth violence. This team is made up of representatives for local churches; the YMCA; United Way; Wilmington Police Department; Cape Fear Volunteer Center; New Hanover Regional Medical Center; the community and other groups. These representatives will work together on the following objectives: develop a targeted marketing outreach plan; define the targeted audiences; develop means for improving the image of children throughout the community; offer opportunities to create shared experiences across borders; build a community wide consensus that this effort is important to everyone; and identify financial and cross marketing opportunities.

Youth Violence Action Team is chartered to reduce the number of defendants among youth (12-24), as well as out-of-school suspensions by 25%. This team is made up of representatives from law enforcement agencies; the Domestic Violence Shelter & Services; Wilmington Housing Authority; child development center; local churches; the community and other organizations. These representatives work together on the following objectives: identify a pilot zone for our work which will be called the Youth Enrichment Zone; hold focus groups with citizens within the Youth Enrichment Zone to identify their needs; identify opportunities for programs and activities; complete an analysis of the root cause; identify institutional causes for youth infractions; formulate a process to coordinate the work of the various agencies; examine alternative approaches for criminal prosecution; and reconnecting convicted youth to education and work.

Ms. Thomas further stated the Youth Enrichment Zone (YEZ) is a project modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone. The goal is to transform communities one block, one area at a time by identifying, coordinating and making community resources available to reduce youth violence. This is a community effort in creating a safe and caring environment for children and families. This effort will include individuals in leadership, in organizations, businesses and schools as well as residents of the youth enrichment zone.

Alderman Taylor asked Ms. Thomas if she would guide the city on the path of combating youth violence stating it was a fact she had the knowledge, wisdom and leadership to direct New Bern down the same path as New Hanover County.

Alderman Kinsey stated he attended the meeting held at Craven Community College on youth violence. Mark Best has some programs already in place; therefore, the city would not have to start at the bottom. Van Culbertson has a male mentoring program already in place. The different groups and organizations need to come together collaborating their efforts.

Alderman White thanked Ms. Thomas for her presentation and would like to see youth violence reduced. There needs to be some enrichments programs in place for the youth, but funds are limited. Is there any type of grants available for cities to apply for in helping to implement the different programs, asked Alderman White. Cities/counties may apply for a “promise neighborhood grant” through the US Department of Education, stated Ms. Thomas.

Alderman Bengel thanked Ms. Thomas for her presentation and realizes there are problems within the communities. There are existing organizations already in place that the city may expand upon. It will be a collective effort on all parties to address the issues of youth violence.

Mayor Bettis stated it is “TABOO” to talk about Trent Court and Craven Terrace; people tend to get silent when discussing the projects. We as citizens need to bring dignity back to the projects. Mayor Bettis further stated he came out of the housing projects in New York, as well as his father who eventually became a doctor.

3. Presentation on City’s Role in Relationship to Housing Authority.

Attorney Davis explained the role the city plays in relationship to the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority is a North Carolina “public body” created under former Chapter 456 of the N.C. Public Laws of 1935 at the request of the Board of Aldermen. The Housing Authority Law is now codified in Chapter 157 of the North Carolina General Statutes. The Authority was incorporated December 28, 1939.

The Housing Authority is governed by no less than five (5) and no more than eleven (11) commissioners who are appointed by the Mayor. Each commissioner serve staggered terms of five (5) years. The number of commissioners may be increased to eleven (11) by a majority vote of the Board of Aldermen. The housing authority is also subject to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rules and regulations.

The Housing Authority is a public body and is subject to the open meeting statute, and must keep minutes of all officials meetings. However, the laws governing the acquisitions, operation or disposition of property generally do not apply to the authority. But HUD imposes additional requirements on the operation of the authority that are different from the operation of a typical public body.

There are alternative forms of organization available to exercise the power, duties and responsibilities of the housing authority, if there is a majority vote by the city council. The housing authority may be abolished with all of its authority, responsibilities, obligations, personnel and property transferred to the city. Additionally, and only if a redevelopment commission exists at the time a housing authority is abolished, the governing council may designate the redevelopment commission to exercise the powers, duties and responsibilities of the housing authority.

The housing authority assembled the real property by purchase and condemnation and is the sole owner of the property, and has the authority to sell its real property. They are subject to the City's zoning, planning, sanitary and building inspection laws. They are also exempt from local taxation, but must file an annual report identifying its activities for the preceding year, and present it to the Mayor.

The Housing Authority is responsible for its own budgeting and accounting system unless the Board of Aldermen by resolution provides that such systems become an integral part of the City's budget and accounting system.

Mayor Bettis asked for the definition of a redevelopment commission. The consulting firm Goody and Clancy is assisting the city with the redevelopment commission. They will be identifying the "blight" areas within the city. These areas will be redeveloped and brought back to life again, stated Mr. Epperson.

Mayor Bettis vowed to rid the city's high crime areas of "thugs" and bring dignity and respect back to public housing. Thirty years ago the downtown area needed help and they got it. The same respect it took to build downtown is going to be used to help eliminate the high crime areas. "We are going to assure the people uptown they will receive the same attention as the people downtown," stated Mayor Bettis.

Alderman Kinsey expressed the city needs to partner and communicate with the housing authority. Both entities need to work as a collective group.

Alderman Bengel suggested that the housing authority have their meetings open to the public. There seems to be a lack of communication. This is a public body and the public needs to know what is going on within the organization. "We all need to be on the same page", stated Alderman Bengel.

Alderman Taylor stated everyone needs to come together in an effort for change. "It is not a problem, it is a situation", stated Alderman Taylor. Alderman Taylor recognized Mrs. Grace Hudson as a Community Watch representative, as an example of making a difference in her community.

Alderman White yielded the floor to Mr. Joseph George for comments. Mr. George stated he did not understand why there was so much focus on the housing authority when three members of the board grew up in public housing. Mr. George said he lived in public housing after his career in the navy and raised his family there while pursuing a college degree. The majority of the people living in public housing are law abiding citizens. The problem is people that are committing crimes give false addresses to the police officers. They often give an address for Trent Court or Craven Terrace. On the other hand, tenants who are convicted of drug offenses are issued eviction notices while they are incarcerated. The housing authority is financially stable and received excellent audits reports.

Mr. Alfred Barfield, NAACP Chair, stated public housing is being stereotyped. Craven Terrance and Trent Court is been label/marked as bad. What the city needs to do is make sure the businesses stop selling illegal drugs and alcohol to minors. The police needs to be more visible in the communities.

Jennifer Wilson, Camden Square, stated she is a secretary at Craven Community College and a nursing student. She is a product of public housing, but has chosen to better herself. It comes down to people having morals and values that must be instilled in children at a young age. It is parenting, the way we raise our children not where we live. It does not matter if you live in Trent Court, Craven Terrace or HUD houses. There are all flavors of people and different cultures. It not about stopping businesses from selling beer and wine; it is about figuring out a way to keep kids away from learned behavior. The Boys and Girls Club is a wonderful outlet. The children are in a structured educational environment. New Bern needs to be proactive; the children are bored. They are walking the streets looking for trouble. On the other hand parents are leaving their homes early for work and the children are taking on more responsibility than they need to bear at a young age. It comes down to economics; there is a lot of poverty within public housing. Crime is throughout New Bern. It is not just low income housing projects; just read the newspaper. "It is not all about change, where do we start to rectify the problem?"

Carolyn Mattocks, Coastal Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention, spoke on the prevention of substance abuse. The Coastal Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention is a five county coalition covering Carteret, Craven, Jones, Onslow and Pamlico counties. Each county has a substance Abuse Prevention Task Force working with the greater group. They work toward policy and environmental change to reduce the number of alcohol related vehicle crashes and fatalities, prevent underage drinking and to reduce the abuse of prescription medications. Alcohol is the third (3rd) leading cause of death among teens than any other drug. Underage drinking cost the citizens of North Carolina \$1.4 billion in 2007. Nearly 20% of North Carolina High School students had their first drink of alcohol before the age of thirteen (13) years. We all need to be a part of

reducing substance abuse among youth by addressing the factors in the communities you reside.

4. Discuss on Process for Removal of Dilapidated Houses.

Mike Avery, Planning & Inspection Director, stated the city has \$100,000 set aside for the dilapidated housing project and there are twenty-five (25) potential demolitions being looked into as a part of the transformation of the Five Points area.

Mr. Avery gave a brief synopsis on the process for removal of dilapidated houses in the city. The authority to repair, close or demolish buildings is found in the GS 160A and also Chapter 38 of the City's Code of Ordinances. When a complaint is received from the public, tenant, neighbor or inspector the owner is notified of the deficiency. A letter is mailed to the owner and they have ten (10) days to reply. The owner shall have the right to file an answer to the complaint and to appear in person giving testimony of the complaint.

The inspector determines whether the dwelling unit is unfit for human habitation, and, if so whether it is deteriorated or dilapidated. The owner can do the repairs or demolish the house themselves or ask the city to do it. If the owner of the property does nothing, the city building inspector can request a demolition ordinance from the Board of Aldermen. The owner is responsible for the cost of the demolition or a lien can be levied against the property.

Alderman Taylor requested clarification as to how the department determined what houses would be demolished. There are a lot of houses in other wards that need to be demolished as well. The city has a wide data base where the information is stored and the following data is taken into consideration: condition of house; complaints; neighborhood impact; readiness; imminent threat; and other factors play into determining what houses will be demolished, stated Mr. Avery. The city needs to be fair and consistent. The city needs to take care of their property first.

Alderman Bengel stated more inspections need to be done; there is a house on Darst Avenue that needs the city attention. The city needs to send an inspector out once a month to look at these houses.

Mike Epperson, City Manager, stated there were probably one hundred (100) houses in New Bern that need to be razed and the city has been doing about one to two demolitions a year.

5. Discuss on Increased Crime Taking Place in Summer Months.

Lt. Chandler Powell gave a follow up on the crime within the communities. The New Bern Police Department along with other departments of the city is

collaboratively working on an initiative to curve the violent activity in the city. The primary focus is the areas of Craven Terrace, Trent Court, Duffyfield and the immediate surrounding areas.

Fights in New Bern have increased in high crime areas, but the number of calls reporting shots fired has decreased since last year. These calls were reported to the police department from July 26, 2011 through August 2011. Fights increased from eight (8) to eleven (11), and shots decreased from fifteen (15) to seven (7). July was the most violent month of the summer, with thirty-two (32) fights and seventeen (17) shots fired throughout the city.

The number of calls for service in the high crime areas relating to fights and shots fired has decreased over the past eighteen (18) days. It was difficult to determine what has caused the decrease, but factors that may have played a part includes the efforts of the police department increasing patrols in the area as well as the city's effort to provide after hour recreational programs. The city's "Beat the Heat" program allowed youths to use recreational facilities after hours with police supervision.

Alderman Bengel suggested an invitation be extended to the District Attorney in helping to combat crime in the communities.

The question was asked if crime was more prevalent in high crime areas due to poverty. Public housing areas and Five Points had the highest concentration of poverty in a surrounding four-county area, stated the City Manager.

Mayor Bettis said the efforts of the city was about providing dignity to people in the crime areas and not pointing fingers. "Good people need areas where they are not victims of crime", stated Mayor Bettis.

6. Discussion on Redistricting.

Alderman Taylor stated the proposed plan removed Craven Terrace completely out of the second ward. He is not in favor of losing Craven Terrace as a part of the new redistricting plan.

Alderman White stated the proposed plan would remove a portion of National Avenue from the 5th Ward into the 1st Ward. He is not in favor of losing any residents of National Avenue as a part of the new redistricting plan.

Alfred Barfield, NAACP Chapter, is reviewing the redistricting proposals for thirty-five (35) counties. He was in attendance to see the city proposed redistricting plans.

It was the consensus of the board to table this item until a later date so it may be discussed in length. The Aldermen would like to have more input on the drawing of the lines that will determine their wards.

7. Adjourn.

Alderman White made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Bengel. The motion carried unanimously, time being 9:45 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk