

**DURHAM CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**Thursday, March 18, 2021 @ 1:00 p.m.**  
**Virtual Zoom Meeting**

The Durham City Council held a regular Work Session on the above date and time virtually via Zoom with the following members present: Mayor Steve Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Jillian Johnson and Council Members Javiera Caballero, Pierce Freelon, DeDreana Freeman, Mark-Anthony Middleton and Charlie Reece. Absent: None.

Also present: City Manager Wanda Page, City Attorney Kim Rehberg and City Clerk Diana Schreiber.

**[CALL TO ORDER]**

Mayor Schewel called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone in attendance at the virtual meeting and offered a special welcome to Durham's new City Manager Wanda Page.

**[ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCIL]**

Mayor Schewel addressed the murders of eight women in Atlanta, Georgia who of the eight, six were of Asian descent; and re-affirmed Council's beliefs that all persons of diverse backgrounds were welcome in Durham.

Mayor Schewel spoke to Transit Workers' Equity and Appreciation Week and read the proclamation.

Stella Adams, representing Durham Transit Workers and the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, accepted the proclamation, made remarks and thanked the transit workers for their efforts.

Mayor Schewel announced that Administrative Specialist Rachel Ruterbories gave birth to her first child, daughter Darcy; and congratulated the new family.

Council Member Reece spoke to para/transit rider-ship and the city's expanded bus service along critical routes; welcomed Google's plan to develop an engineering hub in Durham and urged the City's management to ensure the coding/engineering jobs be generated and sourced from local hires; and spoke to continuing efforts featuring affordable housing programs and city-county, tax abatement grant programs for Durham's long-term homeowners. He appreciated that Google did not ask for economic incentive packages from state, county or local governments.

Council Member Reece addressed the incidents in Atlanta, spoke to his Asian-American heritage and read a portion of the statement from the vigil organized by

the NC Asian-Americans Together, in partnership by UNC's Asian-American Center. The excerpts from "Statement on anti-Asian hate" issued by North Carolina Asian Americans Together follows:

'With heavy hearts, we recognize the violence facing Asian American communities, including the most recent incident in Atlanta yesterday. What happened yesterday has really struck an emotional chord with all of us here at NCAAT, and as a community, we witness and share in the collective grief and mourning during this time.

Last night, eight people were murdered in massage parlors in Georgia. Six of the victims were Asian. This is another tragedy on top of the anti-Asian hate that has been mounting over the last year.

When speaking to the rise of anti-Asian violence during the pandemic, it is impossible to ignore the harmful and inaccurate racialization of the Coronavirus as "Asian." Such racist discourse as espoused by the previous presidential administration links back to a much longer history. Dating back centuries ago, East Asians were lumped together as an existential danger to Western countries under the racist label "Yellow Peril." And we also understand this violence in the broader context of Islamophobia and xenophobia, as our government continues to attack and other-ize immigrant communities.

This most recent attack in Georgia speaks to the dual misogyny and racism that Asian women face. Authorities have hesitated to call the Atlanta attacks a hate crime because the attacker seemed to have other motivations like "sexual addiction" and that the attacker frequented those massage parlors. This ignores the long history of fetishization of Asian women and sexual violence against body workers. This phenomenon has been referred to as "Yellow Fever," often in jest, but with real consequences of violence, like human trafficking and murders like those we saw yesterday.

These examples demonstrate some of the ways in which anti-Asian violence is ingrained in our society. This violence takes many forms. What shows up in the form of interpersonal violence — from casual "jokes," harassment, and shunning all the way up to murder — is a symptom of a larger system of state violence built from white supremacy. We recognize white supremacy as not only individual acts from a few, but rather a larger system we all live under, which has other-ized people through rhetoric, discrimination, immigration policy, and denying equitable resources to address basic needs like housing, health care access, food, and safety for all communities of color.

Our pain and trauma are being used as a wedge between communities in the form of the model minority myth. We are incorrectly and harmfully lumped together into a monolith, effectively erasing our diversity and struggles. We refuse to be used as media fodder, as a tool in this system. We recognize that all

oppression is connected and that we are not alone in experiencing this state-sanctioned violence.

Solidarity is the only way forward. We must recognize the connection between our communities and the violence we face each day, in all its forms. We cannot break these cycles of oppression without addressing our histories and healing our generational traumas. We must stand together and put forth community solutions that do not perpetuate these cycles.'

Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson announced two proposed items for future Work Sessions:

1. Resolution in Support of Black Maternal Health Awareness Week, sponsored by the Mayor's Council for Women; to be addressed at the April 8, 2021 Work Session; and
2. Proposal to create a Poet Laureate Position at the City of Durham, to be addressed at the April 22, 2021 Work Session. Members of the artist community would share their ideas and recommendations for the position.

It was the consensus of Council to support the two agenda item requests.

Council Member Middleton appreciated the support of Amber Wade, Assistant to Mayor Steve Schewel, of the Mayors for Guaranteed Income Initiative; noted that Ms. Wade fielded questions from the university students and thanked her for her efforts; and he estimated October 2021 as the launch date for the initiative. He expressed support for the Google announcement, Asian-American solidarity, and the Transit Workers' Proclamation; and urged more support for the Shared Economic Prosperity Plan by inquiring about the status of a \$300,000 allocation to Stand Up (non-profit).

Council Member Freeman expressed support for her colleagues' advocacy; and noted that when folks felt their power was being taken, that violence often resulted. Referenced Women's History Month and as President of the NC Women's in Municipal Government, in partnership with Reflect US, she announced a listening session to discuss ways to support women in leadership and invited all to attend on March 31, 2021. She looked forward to discussing with City Manager Page how to align local engineering students to the Google Engineering Hub and expressed support for the Transit Workers' Proclamation.

**[PRIORITY ITEMS BY THE CITY MANAGER, CITY ATTORNEY AND CITY CLERK]**

City Manager Wanda Page announced her priority items:

- Impending inclement weather; and

- Supplemental Item #12) Equitable Community Engagement. The item was added to the agenda.

**MOTION** by Council Member Freelon, seconded by Council Member Freeman, to approve the City Manager's Priority Item at 1:36 p.m. by the following vote: Ayes: Mayor Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson and Council Members Caballero, Freelon, Freeman, Middleton and Reece. Noes: None. Absent: None.

The City Attorney's Office had no priority items.

City Clerk Schreiber introduced Administrative Specialist Le-Keisha Griffin. Clerk Schreiber requested direction from Council on the Housing Appeals Board request to extend the terms of their members. She also reminded Council that the Disclosure Statements were due.

Council Member Reece addressed a citizen's request to upload Council's Disclosure Forms to the city's website. Mayor Schewel referred the discussion to the Council Procedures Committee.

**MOTION** by Council Member Freelon, seconded by Council Member Freeman, to approve the City Clerk's Priority Item at 1:41 p.m. by the following vote: Ayes: Mayor Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson and Council Members Caballero, Freelon, Freeman, Middleton and Reece. Noes: None. Absent: None.

Taking the prerogative of the Chair, Mayor Schewel requested that the Housing Appeals request be heard next and asked Faith Gardner, Assistant Director of Neighborhood Improvement Services, to respond.

Ms. Gardner spoke to the background of the quasi-judicial Housing Appeals Board, noted that for virtual meetings to proceed, property owners would have to agree with the virtual meeting format, of which, owners had not been inclined to do; and indicated seven of the Housing Appeals Board eight members supported their terms be extended by one year.

**MOTION** by Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson, seconded by Council Member Freeman, to suspend the rules in order to vote was approved at 1:45 p.m. by the following vote: Ayes: Mayor Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson and Council Members Caballero, Freelon, Freeman, Middleton and Reece. Noes: None. Absent: None.

**MOTION** by Council Member Freeman, seconded by Council Member Caballero, to extend the terms of the Housing Appeals Board members by one year.

Council Member Middleton inquired if there were other boards, committees and commissions who had been unable to proceed in their work due to the pandemic.

Mayor Schewel referenced the Board of Adjustment and remarks by Deputy City Attorney Don O'Toole related to quasi-judicial proceedings.

Ms. Gardner interjected that the motion be worded that the members 'may' extend their terms.

Council Members Freeman and Caballero accepted the revision to the motion.

**MOTION** by Council Member Freeman, seconded by Council Member Caballero, that the Housing Appeals Board members may extend their terms by another year was approved at 1:46 p.m. by the following vote: Ayes: Mayor Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson and Council Members Caballero, Freelon, Freeman, Middleton and Reece. Noes: None. Absent: None.

Mayor Schewel read the items on the printed agenda; the following items were pulled for additional discussion and/or comment:

Items 5 and 8 were pulled for discussion.

Item 7, Change Order 7 with LeChase Construction Services, LLC for the City Hall HVAC and Electrical Renovations Project was requested for review for possible typo of the number, \$15,190, in the memo and summary.

It was consensus of Council to request staff review the language in Agenda Item #7.

**[ITEMS PULLED FROM THE AGENDA]**

**SUBJECT: FY2021-22 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES (ITEM 5/ PR 14548)**

Director of Budget and Management Services Bertha Johnson introduced the item, presented the staff report and was available to answer Council's questions.

Mayor Schewel inquired about the how the American Rescue Act Funding would be processed, expected approximately \$25 million twice in the upcoming year with funding primarily funneled through Community Development and Transportation Departments.

Director Johnson summarized the amount and timeline; stated that \$50 million was expected with \$25 million expected in May 2021 and then the balance within a year. She indicated that Council had until December 2024 to spend the one-time funds and elaborated on the direct allocations for transit and housing funds and spoke to the expected receipts. She noted there were specific funds for restaurants, airports, utility/water assistance, education/public schools, etc. Staff would identify internal uses for the funds, Council would identify their needs and

then the community engagement portion would receive feedback about community needs.

Mayor Schewel supported the neighborhood engagement portion; and spoke to the unemployment, childcare, healthcare, and local/state funds coming into Durham.

Council Member Freeman reflected on thanking organizations who had been organizing for years, prior to the pandemic such as the National League of Cities, the US Conference of Mayors, and others.

Council Member Middleton stated elections had consequences and this time, the Superpower had flexed its muscle without any association with nuclear weaponry and carrier strike groups.

**SUBJECT: CITY CODE REVISIONS FOR WORK CONDUCTED IN THE RIGHT-OF-WAY (ITEM 8/ PR 14540)**

Daniel Vallero, Public Works, responding to a question about reporting back to Council from Council Member Freeman, stated that staff could prepare an annual or quarterly report on City Code Revisions for Work conducted and licenses issued in the right-of-way.

**[SUPPLEMENTAL ITEM]**

**SUBJECT: EQUITABLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE (ITEM 12/ PR 14345)**

Constance Stancil, Director of Neighborhood Improvement Services, introduced the item, her team and staff report; congratulated new City Manager Wanda Page; and updated Council on the ECE (Equitable Community Engagement) Blueprint with a PowerPoint titled, *Equitable Community Engagement - Lynwood Best*, Laura Biediger, Alexis John with contributions by NIS staff of Tannu Gupta, Carmen Ortiz, Jennifer Belle and Kevin Jones.

Lynwood Best, Community Engagement Manager, addressed the charge given to staff by the Council and spoke to staff's response and timeline to create ECE along the Downtown to North Durham Rail Line greenway project; shared the goals of the project pertaining to why and how; spoke to his department's vision: Durham residents were actively involved and had the power to choose their destiny and influence what happened in the community/ self-determination; detailed the city's Racial Equity Vision and Mission; and explained good governance (accountable, transparent, responsive, consensus oriented, participatory, inclusive, following rule of law, efficient).

Laura Biediger, NIS Outreach Manager, spoke to the genesis of the ECE Blueprint in response to the Beltline Project and expanded on the process; focused on the Community Partners Pilot and Community Partner Development Course and contracted with Community Partners. The city was resourcing community members at contract level engagement.

Alexis John explained the five steps of the Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint.

Ms. Biediger noted that the key objective was to expand-build-support community members to participate and that a model was developed to adopt a community level approach; she emphasized that trust and relationship building was essential and urged racial healing conversations and sharing community/history sessions. The NIS Team was frequently contacted about their engagement model from many non-profits, municipalities and universities.

Ms. John detailed how to build ECE in the City by training city staff; explained how it was accomplished and upcoming training opportunities and urged reaching out to the community once rather than multiple occasions for public participation training. She emphasized that staff was working to create a one-stop shop that listed all types of community engagement, including trainings, for staff and public access. She spoke to comprehensive plan outreach and information gathered could be shared with all departments prior to re-asking similar questions in the community.

Ms. Biediger displayed the long-term, vision, strategy projects and initiatives; along with short-term/design and programs and initiatives. She detailed the outreach, data collection and external consultants/ city financial resources utilized to develop six community partners to lead engagement and that future training was being developed with NCCU and Community Partners (non-profit). She listed the FY20 and FY21 community partners.

Ms. John addressed outreach intended to build relationships and trust, accomplished with neighborhood bike rides, weekly trail walks, visual art/cooking classes, bi-lingual community conversations, holiday resource bags and e-communications. Future efforts would be focused on rebuilding the PACs. She spoke to resourcing community-led engagement by pivoting from neighborhood grants to COVID-19 essential needs' grants.

College Heights' Community Stories was scheduled for Friday, March 26, 2021.

Mayor Schewel requested his colleagues to make comments.

Council Member Reece expressed appreciation for Director Stancil's remarks and noted that Durham was a special place that believe in solidarity of all peoples.

City Manager Page reflected on the College Heights photo used in the presentation and noted that two of her family members were photographed.

Council Member Freelon noted that Miss Mack had passed and was also seen in the College Heights photograph; and noted that between community events, that NIS staff had invested their time to create an authentic sense of community and trust that was heard from community members and the presentation was exceptional.

Council Member Freeman echoed sentiments of appreciation for the remainder of the NIS outreach staff; spoke to staff's support of community members during the pandemic, including support of Durhamite Mr. Chavis.

Council Member Caballero encouraged staff to ask for needed resources, with possible expansion of staff.

Council Member Middleton remarked on the extensive amount of work accomplished since the beginning of the request for the ECE Blueprint; and noted that based on history, certain neighborhoods would have to be prioritized.

Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson appreciated the work underway, city-wide, during the pandemic by going virtually and noted there were many issues related to digital access that impacted questions of equity.

Council Member Freeman encouraged staff partner with Equity and Inclusion staff and appreciated Ms. Biediger's work.

Council Member Reece was impressed by the level of work product that had been delivered and expressed his gratitude for staff's commitment to community outreach and trust-building and supported the Better Bus Program. He also spoke in support of the Community Stories program.

Director Stancil spoke to staff introducing local youth to the neighboring trails, of which, the youth had never visited.

Mayor Schewel inquired about issues and analysis section- overcoming delays and project completion due to equitable engagement efforts; and was comfortable with allowing more time for outreach that might not be digital.

Director Stancil spoke to working across departments about projects that were planned years out, in an attempt to reduce future delays.

Ms. Biediger addressed engagement opportunities and the impact on upcoming projects; and supported using data from one department being used by another department, and not over-surveying community members, with special mention to Comprehensive Plan surveying.

Mayor Schewel expressed another concern about forecasting the potential increase in property values by city improvements/projects and how residents in transitioning communities could benefit from improvements while avoiding displacement. He also asked how staff responded to residents who wanted certain projects that the Council could not deliver that involved crucial conversations.

Director Stancil responded that transparency was the number one priority- tell them what could be accomplished, what could not be done, what residents could influence and the decisions already made; and noted listening was essential.

Ms. Biediger responded that it was important to let residents know which aspects of a project could be influenced and to not let residents be overly expectant; and indicated that this information was not divulged in surveys but rather in conversation with community leaders. She added that it was important involve community leaders at the table where decisions were being made and to explain to residents how to influence processes moving forward in the next fiscal cycle.

Director Stancil and Ms. John spoke to community members who responded loudly to an issue, that it was time for staff to lean in, for staff to be there with community members with special mention of hard truths.

Mayor Schewel addressed the re-building of the PACs; noted that Equitable Engagement reached residents beyond the PACS and urged re-building the PACs with a multitude of voices.

Director Stancil mentioned that the PACs were being re-built with more youth support, new voices and leadership.

Mayor Schewel was appreciative that NIS staff was being supported by other city departments and had bought into the vision.

Ms. Biediger addressed the initial ninety-day deadline, that community engagement required flexibility and responsiveness to the community on a general basis rather than having staff impose a structured plan.

Director Stancil appreciated the charge by Council and the plan that developed by conversations with staff and residents, the conversations were intertwined to create a viable vision.

City Clerk Schreiber announced Council's nomination of Adam T. Pyburn to fill the vacancy on the Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission representing the category of Bicycle Commuting.

## **SETTLING THE AGENDA FOR THE APRIL 5, 2021 CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

City Manager Page settled the agenda for the April 5, 2021 City Council Meeting by announcing the following items on the Consent Agenda, 1 through 11.

**MOTION** by Council Member Reece, seconded by Council Member Freelon, to settle the City Manager's agenda for the April 5, 2021 City Council Meeting was approved at 3:21 p.m. by the following vote: Ayes: Mayor Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson and Council Members Caballero, Freelon, Freeman, Middleton and Reece. Noes: None. Absent: None.

Being no additional items to come before Council, Mayor Schewel adjourned the meeting at 3:22 p.m.

Diana Schreiber, NCCMC, CMC  
City Clerk