

March 16, 2021

The Second Regular March meeting of the Danville City Council was held on March 16, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located on the Fourth Floor of the Municipal Building. The following Council Members were present: James B. Buckner, L.G. "Larry" Campbell Jr., Bryant Hood, Mayor Alonzo L. Jones, Barry P. Mayo, Vice Mayor Gary P. Miller, Sherman M. Saunders, J. Lee Vogler, Jr., and Madison J.R. Whittle (9).

Staff Members present were: City Manager Ken F. Larking, Deputy City Manager Earl B. Reynolds, Jr., City Attorney W. Clarke Whitfield Jr., and City Clerk Susan M. DeMasi.

Mayor Jones noted citizens heard the big announcement of Danville's baseball team being named the "Otterbots". He spoke to Mr. Scher who participated in the naming of the mascot and the first game will be on June 3rd.

INVOCATION

The Invocation was given by J. Lee Vogler, Jr., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Mayor Jones recognized Ms. Everlena Ross from Pittsylvania County Community Action, and Gregory Hairston, Chairman of the PCCA Board. Ms. Ross gave Council an update on the PCCA 2020 Community Needs Assessment, which was done every three years to find out the needs in the community. Ms. Ross noted with the budget cuts from program year 2019-2020, along with the COVID pandemic, PCCA still provided services to 7,751 unduplicated clients; for the City of Danville, they provided 1,261 households with a participant total of 2,116 persons. PCCA's Needs Assessment revealed there was a percentage of the population that still faced deep, pervasive struggles lifting themselves out of poverty. Poverty was a growing threat to the Southside that must be addressed and PCCA wants to be a partner in that. The top needs in Danville include housing, healthcare improvement and food. Another finding was that Danville has the second highest percentage of children living in poverty in the Commonwealth, and childcare was a major concern. Access to decent, affordable housing, and homelessness, were major problems that hopefully they can work on together. The local homeownership rate lags behind the state; home ownership rates for Danville residents was 53% while the state average was 64%. The data also showed the link between poverty and race; communities of color were experiencing poverty and unemployment at a higher rate.

PCCA now operates nine major programs along with eight minor programs helping with rental assistance, utility payments, a senior program that provides healthy meals, along with addressing health and socialization concerns. Ms. Ross reviewed some of the other programs noting ten percent of the population in the City of Danville was currently being served by PCCA, who from July 1, 2020 until February, 2021, paid the City of Danville \$120,189.86 in utility payments and \$26,626.93 in rental assistance. They placed thirty-one returning citizens in top paying jobs because of the growth in Danville.

Other programs include applying equity to employment strategies to address specific barriers or populations rather than one model fits all. Advocate for decent and affordable quality housing for all; they were currently serving a number of residents through their weatherization programs, by reducing cost burdens through weatherization measures. Since COVID 19, PCCA has received twenty five calls from citizens who either do not have a place to live or need a place to live; they were working with local organizations to try to find temporary locations to house these people. They want to continue to provide financial literacy and free tax preparation in communities that

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need it most; address child poverty by delivering the two generational approach that will help the children, parents and grandchildren, and deliver teen recreation and work programs to address violent crimes and delinquency, working with regional partners. Ms. Ross noted PCCA was ready to work with the City.

Council Members thanked Ms. Ross and her staff for the work they do in the area.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM VISITORS

Mayor Jones recognized Gus Dyer, 119 Foxhollow Drive, Danville, who noted this evening in work session, Council will begin the process of creating a zoning category for the casino in Schoolfield. Mr. Dyer noted there were a couple items that Council should take special consideration of before beginning the process. Under Buildings, there was a comment about maximum building height, that architectural elements should be capped at the height of the smokestacks. While he appreciated the iconic nature of the smokestacks, he feels this was an arbitrary restriction on the project before it gets started. It was an 80 acre site and there were plenty of places where a structure could be built higher than the smokestacks that would not impact them. Under minimum yard requirements, it states yard setbacks similar to an industrial development; he does not understand that, as he cannot think of any two things more opposed than a casino and a factory. Public interface with the casino was wanted, but not with a factory, and would suggest more of an urban streetscape. On architectural materials, natural steel and glass was more preferable than plastic and synthetic stucco. On signage, the Planning staff thinks the signage ordinance was fine, but as chairman of the BZA it was probably the most common issue they have to deal with. He suggested the City let Caesars decide what they want to do and work around that. Other than that, it was a good plan and looks forward to seeing what the City comes up with.

MEETING MINUTES

Upon **Motion** by Council Member Buckner and **second** by Council Member Campbell, Minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on February 16, 2021, were approved as presented. Draft copies of the minutes had been distributed prior to the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING – CONSIDERATION OF GRANTING TAX EXEMPT STATUS TO GOODWILL OF THE VALLEYS, INC.

Mayor Jones opened the floor for a Public Hearing regarding Goodwill of the Valleys Inc., Tax Exempt Status Request. Notice of the Public Hearing was published in the *Danville Register & Bee* on March 9, 2021.

Mayor Jones recognized Mary Ann Gilmer representing Goodwill Industries of the Valleys, who noted she was there to answer any additional questions Council may have.

Council Member Vogler questioned the exemption they were seeking from real and personal property taxation, the other localities they were located in, do they have that at all of them. Ms. Gilmer noted they do not pay property taxes on their facilities in Radford or Rocky Mount, they were comparable to the Westover facility. They have a smaller facility in Salem where they do pay taxes and they get a 50% reduction in the City of Roanoke.

No one further desired to be heard and the Public Hearing was closed.

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Council Member Buckner moved to **POSTPONE INDEFINITELY**, an Ordinance entitled:

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-03.07

TO DESIGNATE GOODWILL OF THE VALLEYS, INC. AS BEING EXEMPT FROM LOCAL REAL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXATION.

The Motion to Postpone Indefinitely was **seconded** by Council Member Campbell.

Council Member Vogler noted it had appeared they were at the point where no one was going to make a motion that would pass, and asked Mr. Buckner what other discussion he would like to have. Mr. Buckner stated he would like to see if Danville can get more in line with what others in the region were doing, instead of just doing 100%. Mr. Vogler noted it was important to know that it was not the same across the board with other localities; Mr. Buckner brought up a good point in terms of discussing what example Danville might want to pattern themselves after.

The **Motion to Postpone** was carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 9-0
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Jones, Mayo,
Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (9)
NAY: None

Mr. Whitfield reminded Council when they do take up the proposal to grant any kind of tax exempt status, it will require six affirmative votes from Council.

EXPANDING THE SERVICES OF THE HALIFAX PITTSYLVANIA COURT SERVICES PROGRAM

Council Member Buckner **moved** for adoption of a Resolution entitled:

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-03.01

APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ACT FOR LOCAL-RESPONSIBLE OFFENDERS AND THE PRETRIAL SERVICES ACT

The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Vogler and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 9-0
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Jones, Mayo,
Miller, Saunders, Vogler and Whittle (9)
NAY: None

COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager Ken Larking encouraged citizens to sign up for the COVID vaccine. The JCP site at the Danville Mall was now a community vaccination clinic run by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and staffed by contractors from that group. Their goal was to vaccinate up to 3,000 people per day; they did have a slow ramp up the past few days. Today, things were very smooth, people didn't wait in line very long and they were getting people vaccinated pretty quickly. Citizens have to register on line at www.vaccinate.virginia.gov or call 1-877-vaxinva. The

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City helped facilitate vaccinations by using the JCP site for two volunteer run clinics that were held by the local Virginia Department of Health, SOVAH, Averett University, City of Danville, and Pittsylvania County, with volunteer support from nurses in the college programs at Averett and DCC, and multiple volunteers throughout the community. They ran a very smooth operation and were able to show the state that it was able to vaccinate a lot of people at that site. Mr. Larking hoped the people in Danville and Pittsylvania County take advantage and get their vaccine.

Mr. Whitfield noted that Litehouse, who had rented a building from the IDA was no longer a renter. Today they bought the building and paid more for it than the IDA ultimately paid for and improvements.

There were no communications from the Deputy City Manager or City Clerk.

Council Member Mayo gave a shout out to the Danville Police Department for their award ceremony, and thanked Deputy Chief Dean Hairston, Chief Booth and staff. Mr. Mayo noted it was good to see Ms. Ross from the PCCA, discussing what they were trying to do and what they have done through the years. He had a chance to visit the vaccination center at JCP, seeing citizens from the entire region receiving their shots. Mr. Mayo recognized Danville Community College who was in the NFGTM National Challenge with different trade programs; many students at DCC were finalists. It took place March 15th with a lot of competition from throughout the US.

Vice Mayor Miller noted he wanted to recognize the DPS Superintendent, Dr. Hairston and thanked her for coming tonight. Dr. Miller also recognized Tommy Bennett, as well as Steven Gould. Dr. Miller noted Averett had a big announcement last week, joining the Big South Athletic Conference, and Galileo's Scholastic Team won the regional competition and will compete on Saturday for the State Championship. Dr. Miller noted they were going to work with the school board to update the track at GWHS.

Council Member Saunders welcomed Dr. Hairston, and gave a special thanks to Dr. Miller, Tommy Bennett, the City Manager and City Employees with regard to helping people in the City and region with the vaccines. Mr. Saunders noted the operation was now under the State and they chose Danville because of what they did on their own. A lot of people had questions on who was in charge; yesterday was the first day, and there were problems to work out, many people showed up who were not registered; the City Manager has been there trying to help them out. If the State could find some way, for those that show up, to at least get them registered through the portal.

Mayor Jones noted he received a call today from the Fire Department; the Chief was allowing the Fire Department to help register people, door to door. Mr. Larking explained on the first day, the vaccination clinic did turn some people away that showed up without appointments; they have since changed the way they do things, and were trying to help people get registered.

Council Member Vogler thanked the City Attorney for mentioning Litehouse; another company that located in Danville and was hiring people was PRA Group. This past Saturday he went there with Delegate Glenn Davis from Virginia Beach; Delegate Davis had helped them bring the PRA Group to Danville. They toured the facility, which has about 170 employees right now and were hiring more. Mr. Vogler noted the City had a big announcement for their baseball team, the Danville Otterbots; there have been more people talking about baseball in Danville today than there has been in a long time. Barstool Sports put on their website and twitter feed that there was new king in the clubhouse with regards to the best mascot in baseball, the Danville Otterbots. Mr. Vogler noted he was glad to have the Otterbots here in Danville as their new baseball team.

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Council Member Whittle noted the vaccination clinic at JCP was great; there may have been some problems the first day, but encouraged citizens to get their shots.

Council Member Buckner noted he was very proud of where Danville was headed as a City, where they were headed as a City Council and the way the community was spearheading a lot of things in the region. Council Member Saunders has always said, people were watching them in Danville. Mr. Buckner hoped Dave Portnoy of Barstool Sports would come and throw out the first pitch for the Danville Otterbots.

Council Member Campbell noted he was very proud of Danville and its citizens, to see how they were working together on this serious issue; if citizens have not taken the vaccine, he encouraged them to get it. Mr. Campbell noted he was happy to see Dr. Hairston at Council and looked forward to speaking with her in the future. To the City Manager, he was very happy to see what was happening in Danville, they have a bright future, and to Ms. Ross with the PCCA, it was a blessing to see how they were able to work together. Danville was moving forward.

Council Member Hood noted it was awesome to sit there and see how the City was thriving and moving in a positive direction. To be sitting on Council, to see so many citizens that were looking forward to the continued betterment of the City, shows how united they can be and what they have to look forward to in Danville.

Mayor Jones thanked Ms. Ross for being there tonight, with all the wonderful things going on in Danville, to hear about twenty five calls from families that need a place to live, and not knowing how many children were associated with those families, her presentation touched him. Everyone was not as blessed as others, but if they worked together they can help people get to where they need to be. Mayor Jones noted PRA and Litehouse were hiring, Morgan Olson was hiring and the State was in Danville hiring; there were a lot of good things going on in the community. Mayor Jones asked citizens to continue to pray for those less fortunate than them.

ADJOURNED: 7:58 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK