

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022 AGENDA WORKSHOP

Those members present were as follows: Councilor Jaime Anderson
Councilor Lisa Bright
Councilor Ben Short

The City Council then determined the order of consideration for its upcoming agenda. They subsequently discussed the City School Board's formal request for a disbursement of funds held in trust for capital projects. They also discussed the idea of a temporary moratorium on certain residential rezonings. They quickly reached an informal agreement had subsequently instructed the city clerk to add two more resolutions to the proposed agenda. Mayor Choat talked about the upcoming proposed budget and the fact that sales tax revenues have climbed steadily despite the ongoing COVID pandemic. He also announced that he would have a 10:30 am press conference here at the City Hall Annex the next day to explain the City's actions from the current school safety matter. Councilors Short and Bright indicated they too would attend. With no further business to discuss, the agenda workshop ended at 5:32 pm.

The following answered present to roll call: Council President Perry H. Cook
Councilor Jaime Anderson
Councilor Lisa Bright
Councilor Ben Short
Councilor Alan Taylor

Because Council Chambers had a packed room full of school parents wanting to voice their opinions on the recent safety issue at the high school, President Cook informed them they can comment after the regular agenda. He did encourage audience members seeking to speak on any

other matter to do so during public comments. Under public comments, Kathy Prince (109 Magnolia St) addressed her concerns about ADA compliance throughout the Entertainment District parking lot and wanted to know with whom she could talk. Mayor Choat volunteered himself. With no further public comments, President Cook proceeded to the regular agenda.

Councilor Anderson then introduced a proclamation declaring October 2022 as Down Syndrome Awareness Month. She moved and Councilor Bright seconded the motion. **UNANIMOUS Proclamation No. 2022-27** After a brief recess for a group photo with local resident Stephanie Langford and her entourage, the Council resumed its meeting.

Councilor Bright then introduced a proclamation declaring the high school parade on October 20 as a citywide event. She moved and Councilor Anderson seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Proclamation No. 2022-28**

Councilor Short then made a motion for unanimous consent to suspend the rules in order to bring up an ordinance for immediate consideration. Councilor Taylor seconded the motion. **UNANIMOUS** Councilor Short then introduced a proposed ordinance to regulate golf carts and other motorized low-speed vehicles on city streets. He moved and Councilor Bright seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Ordinance No. 2022-019-PS**

Councilor Short then made a motion for unanimous consent to suspend the rules in order to bring up an ordinance for immediate consideration. Councilor Bright seconded the motion. **UNANIMOUS** Councilor Short then introduced a proposed ordinance declaring the future Gymnastics Center property next to the Civic Center as surplus then sell it to City Public Building Authority. He moved and Councilor Bright seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Ordinance No. 2022-020-ADM**

Councilor Bright then introduced a proposed resolution to approve the final sale of surplus city property west of the Cahaba River to the east-side Anderson Circle residential property owners. She moved and Councilor Short seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Resolution No. 2022-46**

Councilor Taylor then introduced a proposed resolution to approve the Fiscal Year 2023 budget. Mayor Choat remarked that the City projects a budget, even as it absorbs high fuel costs citywide and in the new AmWaste garbage services contract (effective December 1) The budget also pays for IT upgrades and absorbs a 6.4% increase in medical insurance premiums. He moved and Councilor Short seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Resolution No. 2022-47**

Councilor Taylor then introduced a proposed resolution giving 7.5% cost of living salary adjustments to Police and Fire employees and 5% to the remaining non-public safety city employees. He moved and Councilor Bright seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Resolution No. 2022-48**

Councilor Anderson then introduced a proposed resolution to approve the 2023 City holidays schedule. She moved and Councilor Taylor seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Resolution No. 2022-49**

Councilor Bright then introduced a proposed resolution to authorize the trustee to release up to \$7 million from the Trussville City Public School Trust Fund, so that the Board of Education can start Phase 1 of its athletic fields master plan. She moved and Councilor Short seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Resolution No. 2022-50**

Councilor Short then introduced a proposed resolution imposing a temporary moratorium on new zoning applications, seeking a residential designation, so that the City and the city attorney can review the zoning ordinance and propose update requirements for Planning & Zoning Commission's & City Council's review and consideration. Applications seeking R-1 or R-2 Single Family zoning would be exempt from the moratorium. He moved and Councilor Anderson seconded the motion for approval. **UNANIMOUS Resolution No. 2022-51**

Before public comments resumed, Councilor Taylor explained to the packed room full of upset & irate high school parents his & Councilor Bright's liaison relationships to Police & the city school board, respectively. He spelled the timeline of City's involvement in the school board's

public safety problem, particularly by the mayor, council and police. Councilor Short also commented and apologized to his colleagues for the timing of his public post on social media and the local paper's website.

Around 6:30 pm, Nathan Pruet (5016 Andrew Lane) asked who appoints the school board and has oversight over the school board members' performances. Mayor answered for the City. Pruet demanded a re-written and strengthened Memorandum of Understanding between the schools and police, as well as updated BOE policies, to include accountability and consequences.

Craig Borden (101 Amber Trace) supported Pruet's positions, expressed appreciation for Mayor's comments and wants transparency.

Russell Moore (4324 Windsong Trail) felt the City has moral mandate to take care of this issue and sees an opportunity to have different reputation that will be a model for the rest of America.

Jessie Odell (7365 Thomas Hall Drive) criticized city leaders for its blind eye to Dr. Patti Neill and "how deceptive she is" He does not believe that city leadership has done a good job picking school board members. "(Board chairman) Cathy Brown has been there too long, and you (directed at Councilor Taylor) have been there too long."

Jenna Chamness (7205 Roper Tunnel Road) supports HTHS Principal Tim Salem's termination. She told the audience she withdrew her daughter from school after she had been assaulted by another student, whom Salem supposedly characterized as "a touchy-feely kid." She filed a police report after the incident.

Karen Johns (124 Redwood Drive) thanked Councilor Short for his online post. She said public trust (of the school board) is so important. "They're fractured right now and this didn't just happen."

Dennis Patterson (4739 Stonegate Place) thanked the city council members for being willing to serve. He opined that "things (schools-related issues) have been swept under the rug."

Kari Brooker (416 Edgeview Avenue) supported what other parents had already said. She would be disappointed if only one person (Salem) takes the fall. She believes more school leaders need removal.

Myranda Haines (2042 Enclave Drive) has a high school junior. She does not feel she knows what important school matters are going on. She gets numerous texts about Huskies athletics but not public safety messages. "You have an obligation to get rid of Dr. Neill. Where is she?"

Councilor Bright subsequently commented that the school board has regular monthly meetings (Next: October 17) and that we need parents to come.

Alison Wine (213 Oak Circle) is the mother of a high school junior. She said her own son knew about the notebook last year. She assumed the Administration took care of everything but they did not. "It's not just one person's fault."

Laura Maddox (112 Oak Street) wants Superintendent Neill removed from office. Her husband Ian Maddox spoke next. After expressing appreciation for city leadership, he called for communication and transparency. He said he has heard enough stories to know things were not handled properly.

Julian Alexander (address not known) asked if the Council has the authority to hire Dr. Neill. Mayor Choat answered "No, it's the BOE." He agreed with putting the principal on leave.

Councilors Taylor and Anderson expressed sympathy to him. Taylor stated the Council wanted to know all the facts, which is why they have asked the hard questions. Mayor Choat added that the City's response system worked. Council President Cook stated that he tried to be open and transparent in his own actions, which is more than he can say for the superintendent.

Erica Elrod (3117 Trace Way) asked openly about the fourth person (unknown) who previously knew about the notebook. Councilor Taylor answered that we don't know, other than it was nobody from the central office.

Melissa Keck (7629 Paine Drive) shared with the public that she had a child who caused trouble one year at a city elementary school. Afterwards, every school administrator and counselor were involved in the disciplining of her kid. She does not understand how happened back then, yet did not happen last fall at the high school after the notebook's discovery.

Michael Kidd (504 Roundabout Drive) wants Dr. Neill fired, citing the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics and State Code 16-12-1. He mentioned he is litigating with Dr. Neill and the BOE over failure to comply with Federal Section 504 plan for his diabetic daughter.

John Ames (204 Enclave Drive) has a child who shared classes with that particular classmate. "Next time you gather with parents," he warned, "don't wait for it to be a funeral."

Amanda Dobbins (686 Chris Court) is a BOE employee. She acknowledged that speaking out could lose her job for speaking out. Communication is the art of leadership and the communication failure starts at the top. She stated that she loves the high school principal and believes "he was thrown under the bus."

Jennifer Heinzman (6534 Riverbend Road) wants to receive important texts from the schools about topics other than athletics. She urged the school board, via Councilor Bright, to cancel its planned retreat. . She asked rhetorically "Do we trust who we have to keep my (14-yr-old) child safe?!" then added "If that child return to the high school, my child will not return."

Jodie Real (451 Woodward Road) claims that her own son is on that list, and that particular student lives down the street. Her family's life has been turned upside down by this. "That child needs (mental) help!"

Robert Letts (3024 Floyd Bradford Road) pointed out that at no time has anybody in the administration sent a message of explanation or assurances to the student body.

Stephanie Moore (4324 Windsong Trail) also has a child on that list. She expressed disgust at Dr. Neill and school board for not responding directly back to her; instead, she got a call from Dr. Salem.

Elizabeth Atkins (130 Wimberly Drive) wants to know what the next steps are. Her 14-year-old daughter is constantly scared and crying, yet all she hears from the BOE is "We got no comment."

Yolanda Hobbs (8088 Carrington Drive) stated her son's name too is on that list. Her tried to be friends with him and later said he was praying for his classmate's mind and for everybody else on that list. "Where's the protection if that child has a trigger?" she stated. "My heart goes out to his parents."

Christy Pritchard (3318 Cahaba Manor Drive) asked when is the hearing for that particular student? She expressed concern about school entry access during Husky Hour. Her daughter Anna then explained that Husky Hour is lunch and a free study period for students to go wherever in the school to study, visit with teachers or each other, etc.

Dwayne Martin (Springville) shared his granddaughter's latest text. She received an anonymous text message stating "Don't go to school. It won't be safe."

Britt Pritchard (3318 Cahaba Manor Drive) suggested an increase police presence at the school.

Kristi Jones (102 Pine Street) finds it unacceptable that she and others have not zero texts or emails reassuring them their children will be safe. It's unacceptable.

Chad Rhodes (6775 Advent Circle) told the city council, "We're giving you a chance to correct it. We're the ones in charge. We're done. It stops tonight."

Laura Maddiox (112 Oak Street) voiced support for Amanda Dobbins. As a teacher in the Homewood school system, she said, she never would be in fear of her job. She made it clear she puts the blame more on O'Neill than Salem.

Nathan Pruet (5016 Andrew Lane) went back to the podium to inform everybody that he has two sons at the high school, and one is on that list. He has gotten zero responses from the School Board and this has to change.

Stacey Shipman (611 Tiffany Drive) opined that bullying is the underlying theme. At the end of her brief remarks, she wondered aloud, "What has he been (previously) through at school? I feel for him."

Councilors Anderson, Bright and Short took turns expressing sympathetic support for them and all other affected families in our community.

Mayor Choat and the City Council carried over all their reports.

With no other business, the Council adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Weinrib', is centered on the page.

City Clerk Dan Weinrib