

**CITY OF NEW CARROLLTON MINUTES
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2023, 7:00 P.M.**

The Council Workshop Meeting was held at 7:00 p.m., on Wednesday, April 5, 2023, as a virtual meeting. Attending were Councilmembers Cynthia DB Mills; Lincoln H.G. Lashley, Katrina R. Dodro, Allyne Hooks and Briana Urbina; Mayor Phelecia Nembhard; Chief David G. Rice; Information Technology Administrator Andrew Facey; Lorna Grant-Charles, Director of Finance & Accounting and City Clerk Araceli Guzman-Benitez.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Mills called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. PUBLIC HEARING: CITY OF NEW CARROLLTON, SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE PROCESS OF THE BUDGET FOR FY2024, FEES FINES AND CIP

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the public hearing.

Lorna Grant-Charles, Director of Finance & Accounting presented the topic and opened the floor for comments and question.

Councilmember Dodro read the comment provided by resident Craig McLane via email:
Item 2. Regarding the proposed 2024 budget: Overall, the budget is sound but it reflects two important facts about the government of New Carrollton that have shaped the community for the past twenty years.

The first of these is that the budget of the police department continues to be enlarged while the budgets of Public Works and Administration continue to be whittled away. As a result, both the physical plant of the community and its sense of itself as a community must slowly contract and deteriorate. That causes property values and rents to stagnate, then fall. Crime then increases. Urban planners, sociologists, psychologists, social workers, and criminologists are unanimous that to prevent failed, dangerous neighborhoods, the government should invest in a healthy and vibrant physical community before things get bad – because it will prevent them from getting bad. Draining Public Works and Administration to feed the Police Department is a case of placing the cart before the horse.

The second of these is that New Carrollton's government has had no plan for the community since Albert Turner was mayor, but instead works to keep things as they are. It has no plan beyond simply preserving what can be preserved from falling apart, and replacing only those things that must be replaced, and meeting all legal and financial obligations in the meantime. Suitable plans for a healthy, vibrant community are grown from a vision of what the community might become, and it is unfortunately true that our elected officials do not typically share their visions of what New Carrollton could become when they speak to residents. This could be called “community development”. Significantly, even the far less encompassing idea of “economic development” is essentially zeroed out in this budget – barely a seventh of what the government would spend on gifts and events for its employees.

As a result, the 2024 budget proposal, while generally sound, is a caretaker budget that appears

likely to meet all legal and financial obligations, but will leave the city just a little less well-off than it was the year prior.

Those generalities said, there are a few items that bear closer examination:

- The increase in expected revenue from Red Light Camera seems optimistic
- Why is the street repair budget zeroed out and the sidewalk repair budget cut in half?
- Why no earmark for bridge repair when the Powhatan/Westbrook bridges need work?
- Why is Workers' Comp cut by a third in Police Support but increased over historical levels in Code Enforcement?
- Does the Speed Camera require a \$75K employee as well as overtime for police officers, in addition to the \$280K in fees paid to the vendor?
- Is it wise to cut Police Admin General Liability expenditures in half?
- The decrease in Admin Cable TV Operation expense is dramatic - maybe optimistic
- Franchise fees for Comcast and Verizon seem awfully low, for the revenue they collect here
- Are other municipalities paying a half million dollars to service the same number of Red Light Cameras?
- Are we really planning on spending \$35K on gifts and events for employees, over and above the \$2K for gifts and special occasions in Admin and \$7K for awards to Police?

Items 3 & 14. Strictly speaking, neither of these items could reasonably be described as addressing an impact of the pandemic on the community. The use of ARPA funds is probably not appropriate.

Items 3, 10, 13 & 14. All of these proposed expenditures are complicated and technical in nature, and many other organizations refer such contracting issues to a specially-constituted Source Selection Authority (normally a committee) so officials who lack the technical knowledge aren't confronted with a choice that unavoidably have long-term implications they can't imagine. The Source Selection Authority agrees upon criteria that they will use to evaluate the vendors' proposals and after doing so provides a recommendation to the decision-makers, along with any explanations or information they might require. Council should think about developing a similar process for the City.

Item 3. Software purchases should be approached with caution. Typically, the vendor downplays the difficulty of migrating existing data, designing and populating databases, and carrying out training of City employees to use the new system while those employees are supposed to be performing the duties they were hired to do. This training is critically important. Also, vendors often understate the cost of the ongoing technical support for the users of their product, as well as how often the users will need to request such support. Failing to obtain a realistic estimate will lead to finger-pointing, and sour the relationship between vendor and customer, leading to a poor return on investment.

Item 4. Regarding the proposed Schedule of Fees: In general, the Schedule contains many format errors and is not yet in acceptable shape to be approved as an official document. Further, the final item on the Schedule seems to suggest that all single family households will be subject to a \$19/yr assessment for trash pickup. The wording should be adjusted to clarify the actual meaning, since such an assessment has not been publicly discussed and would upset residents.

Item 14. Unfortunately, Tasers have been implicated in a small but statistically significant number

of deaths. Phazzer claims its device has a better safety record than the Taser. However, the company lost out to Axon, the makers of Taser, in a patent dispute that forced Phazzer into bankruptcy, and out of business. Phazzer seems to have made adjustments to its product and re-entered the market in 2021, but it might be a bit early to be confident that they'll be able to stand behind their product for the foreseeable future – which Axon certainly will. This is not a simple matter.

Item 19. City government meetings should return to the in-person format and should be opened to the public.

Grant-Charles thanked the resident for his input and provided a brief response. There will be a second review of the budget before finalizing it.

3. PRESENTATION: PROPOSED BUDGETING SOFTWARE PURCHASE THROUGH ARPA FUNDS

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Steve Layne and Scott from Opengov to speak and explain the topic of a proposed budgeting & planning.

Councilmember Lashley had a question about the work of Opengov; Chairperson Mills asked a question about how to archive current file; Councilmember Dodro asked a question on how to handle cyber security or cyber-attack and contracting questions; resident Alarcon had a question about long-term services.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE SCHEDULE OF FEES FY2024

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Ms. Grant-Charles explained the topic and updates made to the schedule of fees.

Councilmember Lashley asked if this will include Airbnb's, and updating wording on certain language, and removal & disposal of trash clarification; Councilmember Dodro clarified that \$19 is the fee for recycling single-family dwellings, trash \$120 for single-family dwellings, condominiums are \$60, which goes to the tonnage to Prince George's County, she requested housing rental, Airbnb fees should be added to the schedule of fees now, that copy of financial statements and copy of lobbying registration to clarify that is free by retrieving it online but it should not cost \$50, she had a question about the meaning of a temporary license and filing fee for departure.

5. 2023 GENERAL ELECTION UPDATE

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Mr. Charles Davis, Chair of the New Carrollton Board of Elections and Araceli Guzman-Benitez, City Clerk presents elections update

- A list of Certified Candidates was provided
- A Candidate's Forum will take place in-person and via Zoom, Thursday, April 20, 2023 at 7:00 pm, at the New Carrollton Municipal Center and Via Zoom. The League of Women Voters will contact the candidates directly. The candidate's forum is independent from the City of New Carrollton and the New Carrollton Board of Elections

- Monday, April 3 was the DEADLINE to register with Prince George’s County Board of Elections in order to vote in the City’s General Election
- Absentee Ballots also known as "mail-in ballots" are available via request
- The DEADLINE to submit an Absentee Ballot request form is Friday, April 28 (5:00 p.m.) or (Contact the City Clerk at aguzman@newcarrolltonmd.gov). We ask residents who have turned in an absentee ballot request form, to be patient as ballots have not been processed.
- A Ballot Drop Box is in front of the Municipal Center (Any resident who would like to drop-off an absentee ballot request form and eventually an absentee ballot will be able to do so at any time)
- EARLY VOTING – Saturday, April 22, 2023. Polls will open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., New Carrollton Municipal Center – Multipurpose Room. (6016 Princess Garden Pkwy)
- ELECTION DAY – Monday, May 1, 2023. Polls will open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., New Carrollton Municipal Center. – Multipurpose Room. (6016 Princess Garden Pkwy)

Councilmember Dodro provided suggestions on how to word absentee ballots in order to follow updated language from the State of Maryland; Councilmember Lashley had a question about LWV; Ms. Araceli provided further information about the topic.

6. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Chairperson Mills stated that the Av room is ready. She perhaps the next meeting might be in person.

7. REPORT OF THE MAYOR AND ADMINISTRATION

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Mayor Nembhard called the Chief of Police to provide his report; March 2023 statistics: 913 calls for service, 127 (911 disconnects), 25 vehicle accidents, 7 assaults, 5 burglaries, 48 disorderly, 31 domestics, 13 family disputes, 14 hit-run, 2 citizen robberies, 8 TA robberies, 11 theft from auto, 6 stolen vehicles, 2 CDS, 8 suspicious persons, 27 suspicious vehicles, 83 traffic stops, 51 quality of life intervention, 122 State citations, 40 SCRO, 52 parking citations, 88 warning citations, 3 of a total 305 citations.

Mayor Nembhard provided an update about the Department of Public Works and the trash totters; trash regulations needs to be updated; she provided an update on the contract for recycling; she mentioned that she is in contact with Prince George’s County in reference to the bridge on Westbrook Drive; Jodie Street road work update; a water truck for DPW, will be one topic to present to the council in the next meeting; she thanked the council for approving the purchase of the new police vehicle; old vehicles were placed on Gov-deals; the topic of the new website was addressed; she addressed the Chief and councilmembers to clarify that in the City of New Carrollton the spokesperson is the Mayor or the City Attorney, about an incident that occurred at Foodway, and an incident with a police officer; employment interviews; pushing forward to build a community center to engage the youth and senior citizens; green initiatives and economic development; she has completed an audit and inventory of assets since 2020; she

mentioned the first multi-cultural event coming up to highlight black history month; they rolling over the fleet management software; an update on Clear Water Partnership project will be provided; the Frenchman's Creek playground has been renovated; she applied for grants to help with road repairs; trying to attract more businesses through economic development through Prince George's County, she is economic development certified; the state of Maryland Secretary of Small Business made a visit to the City of New Carrollton; she thanked the council for approving the Covid-19 utility/rental assistance and home improvement programs; she is constantly searching for food resources and suitcases were collected to provide to children in foster care, she thanked Council Chairperson Mills for providing suitcases through her church as well as Ella-kids for donating toys; repairs are required in different places in the municipal center, some bathrooms were renovated; planning more green initiatives such as solar and electric car purchases in order to maintain Sustainable Maryland certification; preparing to clear up the Harland Street property; working on school initiatives to help the parents; she applied for solar grants from the State; she received the trail blazers award from the Academy for Excellence in Local Governance at the University of Maryland, and some employees were certified; she provided many proclamations through a committee; five staff members were CERT certified; the local fire department need resources that maybe the city may provide through ARPA funds; she invites everyone to the first multi-cultural event in the City of New Carrollton; she wished all the women in the city a happy belated women's month.

8. COUNCIL QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO REPORT GIVEN BY MAYOR AND ADMINISTRATION

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Councilmember Dodro thanked the Mayor for visiting her website and implementing her ideas; she asked the Chief about an incident that happened in Foodway; Chief Rice stated that there is an ongoing investigation and provided a brief explanation; she requested information about a staff member who was found guilty of assault and was put in a position from the budget that is \$0; Councilmember Lashley had questions about the budget and he welcomes everyone to the multi-cultural events; Ms. Grant-Charles responded to those questions; Councilmember Hooks did not have any questions; Councilmember Urbina had questions about the budget, and what funds are being used to pay Mr. Harris who is now the Fleet Manager, who does HR reports to in order to make those types of hires.

9. 6000 HARLAND STREET CLEAN-UP

Chairperson Mills discussed the topic, and stated that they are going to clean the property due to the condition that the property is in.

Chairperson Mills explained further that the council needs to contact the administration about certain topics.

10. MUNICIPAL CENTER SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATION PROPOSAL

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Andrew Facey discussed the topic and explained the need for solar panels at the municipal center to qualify for the next Sustainable Maryland certification.

Councilmember Dodro stated that she does not agreed to install solar panels due to the stipulation that the building has, perhaps the maybe putting solar panel at the Hank Building;

Councilmember Lashley felt that it is not an urgent matter to place solar panels at this time and questioned the pricing of the proposals; Mr. Facey further explained; Councilmember Hooks did not have questions; Councilmember Urbina asked when will this start paying for itself; the response was the 11th year.

11. DISCUSSION PETITION REQUEST: RESTRICT PARKING TO PERMIT HOLDERS AT QUENTIN CT

Chairperson Mills discussed the topic of the cul-de-sac to enforce to permit parking; residents of that area gathered to sign a petition to the city; Mayor Nembhard stated that parking is a problem throughout the city but Code Enforcement Department stop working at 5:00 pm however after hours the police department write tickets; Chief Rice explained that they can work on a solution; Councilmember Urbina supports helping those residents to find a solution; Councilmember Lashley feels that emergency vehicles can have issues getting access to the cul-de-sac; Councilmember Dodro explained that in the past there was a criteria to request parking permits at a specific section, that it can be good to create a group facilitator to work with the community to create solutions on how to deal with parking.

12. EMERGENCY REPLACEMENT OF THE COOLING TOWER AT THE MUNICIPAL CENTER

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Mayor Nembhard explained the situation with the cooling tower and the need to replace it. She explained that the ceiling is falling apart.

Councilmember Urbina explained that she set forth the terms in which she will be willing to vote on things that cost money but that she is not in control of things that she requested but does not get a response to.

13. DISCUSSION FUEL TANK REPLACEMENT

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Mayor Nembhard stated that since the time Latasha was here she had brought up the topic of the fuel tank being past its age, that she will provide information about the underground tank which can be piggy-back from two state bid contracts and that one company will bring a 500 gallon tank during the replacement of the new tank; she further explain the topic.

14. PHAZZER vs TAZER POLICE EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Chief Rice explained that the equipment has come to their end life; they are not able to fix them; brought a proposal to replace them; the options are Phazzer or Tazer but that the Phazzer is cheaper to the other.

Councilmember Lashley requested explanation in the quality and safety of the equipment deployment; Ms. Grant-Charles stated that the cost of the Phazzer is \$24,775.30 as compare \$64,898.70, the purchase will be using ARPA funds; Councilmember Urbina requested explanation about the safety of the equipment and is it approved to be paid by ARPA funds; Chief Rice answered the questions; Mayor Nembhard thanked Capt. Butler for putting this topic together, that the ARPA consultant was called for small equipment; LPRs was another small

equipment to incorporate in the future.

15. FY2024 BUDGET ORDINANCE

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the topic.

Ms. Grant-Charles requested to discuss the budget ordinance next meeting to be able to make changes and prepared the final draft.

16. PROCLAMATIONS

Chairperson Mills discussed the topic of proclamations for next meeting.

- a) Municipal Clerks Week
- b) Municipal Police Week
- c) National Public Works Week

17. MEETING MINUTES

Chairperson Mills requested that the Council review the following meeting minutes.

- a.) Council Workshop/Special Legislative Meeting Minutes (February 1, 2023)
- b.) Council Special Workshop Meeting Minutes (February 8, 2023)
- c.) Council Legislative Meeting Minutes (February 15, 2023)
- d.) Council Workshop/Special Legislative Meeting (March 1, 2023)
- e.) Council Special Workshop Meeting (March 8, 2023)
- f.) Council Legislative Meeting (March 15, 2023)

18. REVIEW LIST OF PAID BILLS

Chairperson Mills requested that the Council review the following the list of bills.

Batch #1 (March 3, 2023); Batch #2 (March 13, 2023); Batch #3 (March 17, 2023); Batch #4 (March 24, 2023).

19. PUBLIC COMMENT- RESIDENTS' CONCERNS, AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AND, PHONE CALLS

Chairperson Mills open the floor for the audience participation.

Resident- David spoke about the parking issues and the GVWR from the city's charter; he was born in 1953 and brought up the position of the City Council Chair has her position only because she can adjourn meetings and is not acceptable, calling all citizens to come to their senses May 1st.

Ce-Ce addressed Councilmembers Dodro and Urbina provided comments not very clear.

5813 Lamont Dr.- Pat Jackman: Explained that Sustainable Maryland requires a Green Team but the Green Team has not met; April is Earth month, what has the city initiated to celebrate earth month; she had a question about kitchen waste composting.

Mayor Nembhard stated that the composting will be revisited; past Saturday they held a shredding event but will not be able to do a clean-up day due to early voting; the city will plant 100 trees; a tree will be planted.

Angela Alarcon – provide a comment about footage being beat by police officers; she requested an explanation about the officer who was given a position that was not advertised; she is questioning the transparency of the Mayor, the council and the police; she wants to know how will the Chief address this type of behaviors; Chief Rice stated that he cannot get into the topic.

20. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS NOT ALREADY SUBMITTED

Chairperson Mills stated that she would not request future agenda items.

Councilmember Urbina requested to put forward an Ordinance that makes it impossible for someone who was convicted of a crime that they conducted while they were employed by the city to be rehire by the city.

Mayor Nembhard addressed Ms. Alarcon that it was the first time that she viewed those videos herself was when those videos surface through the media; Mr. Jeffery Harris was not fired by the Police Department and he was not re-hired; she stated that the information that they received is false information.

21. ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Mills called the adjournment.

There being no further business, Chairperson Mills moved to adjourn the Council Workshop Meeting for Wednesday, April 5, 2023. No one seconded the motion. Not everyone were in favor. **(1-3-0)**.

Chairperson Mills adjourned the meeting at 10:09 pm.

The meeting ended at 10:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Araceli Guzman-Benitez

Araceli Guzman Benitez

City Clerk

Adopted by the City Council on August 16, 2023.

Note: The official recording of the City of New Carrollton’s Council Workshop Meeting of Wednesday, April 5, 2023, has been posted to the City of New Carrollton’s website: www.newcarrolltonmd.gov.