

MINUTES FOR THE THOMASVILLE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL CALLED MEETING ON MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2022 AT 6:30 PM AT 7003 BALLPARK ROAD, THOMASVILLE, NC.

Elected officials in attendance: Mayor Raleigh York, Jr.; Mayor *Pro Tempore* Doug Hunt, and Council Members Wendy Sellars, Lisa Shell, Jeannette Shepherd, Hunter Thrift and Payton Williams. Council Member Ron Bratton had an excused absence. A quorum was present.

The following staff members attended the meeting: City Manager Michael Brandt and City Clerk Wendy Martin

1. Call to Order – Mayor Raleigh York, Jr. called the meeting of the Thomasville City Council to order. He explained that each applicant would have 15 minutes to make their presentations to Council.

2. Presentations were made by the following Outside Agency Fund Applicants:

A. Thomasville City Schools - Dr. Cate Gentry, Superintendent
(19.5 cent tax rate (\$1,660,000) requested – no change from last year)

Dr. Gentry advised that in 2020 and 2021, the City of Thomasville allotted a supplemental school tax of 19.5-cents to the Thomasville City Schools (TCS). In 2021, TCS received \$1,613,198 from the City. They are budgeted to receive \$1,658,753 in 2022. She asked that the City maintain the same 19.5-cent tax rate, with an approximate budgeted tax value of \$1,660,000.

She said TCS is funded locally by the County of Davidson and the City of Thomasville. She explained that Thomasville pays for approximately one-third of their local funding, and this funding pays for:

- teacher supplements (to keep teacher salaries at a competitive rate with other counties);
- the Jr. ROTC program (paid for by local funds and U.S. Army allotments);
- supplies and rentals for graduation ceremonies;
- salaries of local employees, most of whom are school-based treasurers, data managers and clerical and administrative support at the central office;
- athletic programs, supplements, supplies and activity buses;
- utilities, insurance, telecommunications;
- stipends and development opportunities for the School Board;
- legal and financial auditing;
- testing and accountability requirements;
- district data management;
- Finch Auditorium; and
- school vehicles.

Dr. Gentry advised that the State budget passed in November of 2021 required that all school employees make a minimum of \$13 per hour, with an increase to \$15 per hour by July 1, 2022. She said TCS supports that, because they want to attract strong employees. However, the State funding does not cover that increase, so the School System is going to have to find ways to fund that increase.

She also referred to page 3 of the handout and stated that there had been a 70% increase in retirement and a 42% (\$2,205) increase in hospitalization insurance coverage over the past 10 years. She added that the local employees receive the same pay as the federal and state employees.

Dr. Gentry said TCS serves students from other schools. For example, the ROTC program has students from East Davidson and Ledford, because those schools do not have that program.

She said ESSR (Elementary and Secondary Schools Recovery) funding for K-12 public schools from the American Recovery Plan has been helpful, but it "has a shelf life," so she asked that the City continue to help TCS be sustainable over the long run.

Part D. of the TCS application includes a 5-year review of funding sources. They receive funding from the Federal, State, County and City governments.

In June of 2018, when she became Superintendent, TCS was \$1.2M in debt. That debt has been nearly paid off. It is down to \$33,000 now, and it should be paid off by the end of this year. They have done that by tightening up with personnel and spending.

In addition, they receive some private funds through grants. They recently won a \$500,000 competitive 3-year grant from the State to pay for teacher development and leadership skills. They won a \$366,000 grant from the Department of Justice for some security projects (upgrading security cameras and getting a more-secure keyless entry system) Also, they receive some donations from the ABC Board for drug and alcohol education and United Methodist Church for the homeless population; and they get grants to promote student and teacher wellness.

Council Member Hunt asked how many students are in the TCS system. Dr. Gentry said there were 2,233, as of October. She added that about 25 graduated since then.

Council Member Shepherd asked if the schools were fully staffed. Dr. Gentry said all teacher assistant positions are filled, but there are 8 teacher vacancies currently. They have had 8 – 11 vacancies all year.

Council Member Sellars asked how much we spend on each student. Dr. Gentry explained that the Federal rate per student is \$530 (not including the ESSR funds, since that is not sustainable); the State pays approximately \$9,000 per student; and Davidson County allotted \$1,215 per student this year; (Dr. Gentry added that is in the bottom five in the State of NC, and it has been for several years.) Michael Brandt calculated the City contribution to be about \$716 per student.

Council Member Hunt asked if the total budget included funds from federal, state, county and city. Dr. Gentry said it did. She explained that non-ESSR Federal money is based on the needs of the student population (free/reduced lunch population, etc.) It's supplemental money to account for discrepancies in other areas of funding.

Council Member Sellars asked if all the students still received free lunches. Dr. Gentry said all the schools in the State currently receive free lunches. She thinks that will end at some point, but TCS qualifies for a "Community Eligibility Program", and it is in the second year of a five-year term, so students will continue to receive free lunches at least until that term expires.

Council Member Williams asked what percentage of students were at or below poverty level. Dr. Gentry explained that due to the Community Eligibility Program, students don't currently have to fill out applications for free/reduced lunch, because based on the needs of the overall community and services within the community (such as EBT cards, SNAP benefits, etc.) ALL kids qualified - because of the community need. However, she estimated that approximately 70% of the elementary students are at or below poverty level, with 62% at the middle school level, and 60% at the high school level.

Council Member Sellars asked what percentage of students in the TCS school system do not live within the TCS district, and whether TCS receives funding from those other districts. Dr. Gentry said as of October, 39 students came from outside of the district - that they know of. However, 37 TCS district students went to other districts for school. This was mostly because teachers' children follow them to their district. However, she said funding does follow the child.

Council Member Thrift said, "It's excellent that you've taken care of the debt that you've inherited. I'm sure that was difficult." Dr. Gentry said they've worked hard to it. She added that their goal in the next three years is to get to the point where \$1.3M is three months of spending, because that's a responsible savings rate. She said maintaining the current 19.5 cents from the City would help get them through the next cycle.

B. Davidson County Economic Development Commission - Steve Jackson, Chairman (\$50,000 requested – no change from last year)

Mr. Jackson said the EDC's job is to recruit industry, create jobs and build the tax base.

The EDC is requesting the same amount of funds as last year, and Mr. Jackson said, "We are looking to continue what we've been doing."

He explained that the funds they receive from the City helps pay for:

- the EDC's website, which has become the main way people access information about our community since COVID. He said it drives a lot of traffic our way; and
- the Davidson/Davie Apprenticeship Consortium (prominently featuring Mohawk, a big part of Thomasville and Davidson County). *Note: the EDC manages the books for this consortium.

Some projects the EDC has been involved in from 2019 - 2022 include \$202M in expansions from Mohawk, Minnewawa (\$3M expansion), and Brasscraft (\$17M). About 300 jobs have resulted from those expansions alone.

In the past three years, \$286.5M worth of EDC projects have directly benefited Thomasville, and there are currently three new prospects worth a total of \$48M that could bring about 150 more jobs to Thomasville.

Mr. Jackson said the EDC's efforts have come a long way, and he thanked Council for their support in that.

Council Member Thrift asked Mr. Jackson how the EDC brings businesses to Thomasville.

Mr. Jackson said the Davidson County EDC proactively pursues these opportunities. They don't just wait for businesses to contact them. They have built a relationship with the State Economic Development office, and they use them as a source. They also are well known in the consultant community. It is consultants who drive these projects. They sort through and figure out which are legitimate prospects for Thomasville and which are not.

He said, "There are many, many sources of interests that come to us when we respond to a request or we generate a request. Then we talk about the qualities of our community, the number of employees, and the education systems we have in place to facilitate jobs."

C. Historic Preservation Commission - Scott Ford, Chairman (\$2,000 requested – new applicant this year)

Mr. Ford requested \$2,000 on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission "for mostly educational purposes."

He said the HPC is in place to preserve, protect and oversee restorations in historic properties and landmarks located in the City's historic districts. He said, "Our goal is to educate and evolve the public in responsible curation of our city's treasured buildings, homes and landmarks."

The HPC is undergoing change with new members. They want to educate homeowners of historic properties and the general public. They want to: make contact with the residents of Thomasville's historic districts to help inform them of the special rules for their special homes; hold workshops; give tours of the historic properties; and be more visible and accessible at Thomasville's public events, such as Everybody's Day – perhaps in some matching polo shirts or t-shirts, and perhaps selling items as a fundraiser.

These funds would help them to elevate the appearance, attractiveness and the spirit of Thomasville's beautiful historic districts.

The Commission wants to distribute door hangers or brochures highlighting Thomasville's historic districts and educating the property owners there of the properties and boundaries and raise awareness of the Commission's new "standards" (which are not just guidelines anymore.) He said they want to do some mapping so people know which properties are in the Historic districts.

It also wants to host DIY workshops and keep some Commission members educated with CE credits.

The Commission would also like to pay a contractor to consolidate and scan their historical records and pictures, so they can be more accessible to the general public on their website. Mr. Ford mentioned that this would be helpful since the Commission no longer has many of the elder members of the group like Bill Colona, who used to be such a valuable resource.

Mr. Ford said they do have some funds (~\$2,500) that they have raised over the years, but they haven't spent it all because they didn't want to have empty coffers.

Council Member Hunt asked if they have any other sources of income. Mr. Ford said they do raffles and outside book sales at Everybody's Day and Spring Daze.

Council Member Thrift, former HPC Member, said one of their biggest problems back then was educating people who moved into the district, so this was exciting to him.

Mr. Ford said this new membership doesn't want to sit around and wait for people to come to them with CIA's. They are enthused and want to "lift this little town up" like Salisbury did. Their historic properties were dilapidated, but they've turned it around. They now have an historic tour in October that brings in probably 10,000 visitors. He said, "The homes here, for the most part, aren't as grandiose and as fine as some of the bigger homes in Salisbury, but we've got some stuff to show off."

He added that Thomasville homes have stories to tell, too. For example, the plans for Trinity College (later, Duke University) were drawn up in the living room in his house, which is also known as the Hoover House.

Council Member Williams appreciated his excitement about the projects he was talking about. She asked if the DIY workshops would generate revenue. He was hopeful that they would. He said they have paid for their members to go to various workshops for their CE credits that they need to stay accredited. He hopes to host some of those workshops to generate revenue. He said after paying for the expert to conduct the class, it would hopefully more than pay for itself.

Council Member Sellars asked if the educational door hangers would just be for the people who live in the historic districts. Mr. Ford said they would, because they could really benefit from the information the most. However, the same information also would be available to everyone on their website and at Everybody's Day and other public events, as well as at the DIY workshops.

He hopes to have a professional set up the website to make it user friendly.

D. Arts Davidson - Amanda Murphy Feliciano, Executive Director

Ms. Feliciano said the amount requested would support the Sunset Sounds concert, which they are trying to bring back. She said, "This year, we kind of wanted to start small and just do one night and see how things go, since we're just kind of getting our legs back underneath us coming out of all the COVID restrictions."

She said she has been in conversations with Cameron at Tourism and with PACE, and the event is growing a little bit. Ms. Feliciano wants to work with Tourism and have them push the event out and bring some people in.

It could be more than a concert. She is looking into having some vendor events with Arts Davidson artists – maybe doing demos and/or selling their art.

She met with PACE and discussed having artists at the Emporium, to spread it more out into the city than just PACE Park.

Ms. Feliciano said they would like to spread out and do more things in Thomasville.

Council Member Thrift said Arts Davidson struggled for a couple of years. He asked if she thought they were doing well now that they restructured. She said the previous board consisted of long-time members who needed a break. However, they are still volunteering and helping out. They also added a new employee.

She added that they've had income from CARES Funds, Grassroots funds and ARPA funds. She said these funds are recharging them and bringing more programming and more opportunities.

Council Member Shepherd asked if everything proposed was already set up. Ms. Feliciano said everything in the packet she submitted "is set up and will happen, as far as bands and all that. The other pieces we're working to see if that's a possibility."

E. City Beautification - Carol Brown, Chairperson

Ms. Brown said the Committee was established in 1979 to "have flowers planted in the City in the spring and fall and to purchase any decorations for the town, including banners and Christmas."

She became chair person in 2004. Since then, they have expanded their mission and goals to include many more projects, and they have continued making improvements, upkeep and any repairs as needed.

They try to do a new project each year, such as:

- refurbishing Will Harbor Park (corner of Main and Randolph) with plants, a walkway, benches, and arbors;
- developing John Hauss Park (Salem Street) with plants, a walkway;
- developing Fairgrove Park (at the entrance to Fairgrove Forest);
- totally renovating the Downtown Fountain (Nona Welborn Park) in 2007, including adding benches and trash cans. (The cost of that renovation was \$40,000. Finch Foundation paid for half of it);
- repainting the lamp posts and clock tower;
- adding rockwork around the Fountain to replace deteriorating brick;
- maintaining the flower beds at City Hall and added planters;
- added flower beds at the Parks and Rec's main office;
- added a new brick welcome sign at the Park and Ride lot on 109 North;
- added new Welcome to Thomasville letters on the existing brick signs;
- purchased a rock sign weighing over a ton at Veteran's Memorial Park;
- replaced lights on top of the buildings and trees with LED bulbs and replace them as needed;

- they've had the Pepsi mural on John Thomas Way, the original Big Chair mural on Salem Street, murals around the building on Trade Street;
- HVAC system at Trade Street;
- plant about 475 flats of flowers a year and 3,500 tulip bulbs in the fall around the City, (1,500 alone goes around the Big Chair), the Fountain, many parks, welcome signs, Depot and City Hall, and now Finch Field during the Hi-Toms' season, per a request from Greg (Suire). Ms. Brown said the cost of materials has increased tremendously;
- In 2014, they purchased a 26' Christmas tree, lighted snowflakes and banners. In January of 2022, the Christmas tree was damaged beyond repair by heavy winds, so they purchased a new one. (This was paid for, in part, by a \$5,000 donation from the Finch Foundation that was going to be used for the old Belk Christmas window display. The display is an ongoing expense with mechanical motors. 5 were sent to NY this year for repairs at a cost of \$5,000);
- This spring, they got a quote of \$4,200 for mulch to go at the George Hunley Underpass;
- They participate in Everybody's Day and National Night Out; and
- They speak about beautifications at local clubs and organizations;

She said that the money left in their account will be used up with spring planting. She said, "We are very resourceful with the funds that we are given. I'm very proud of every dollar that has been spent."

She added that the volunteers work very hard to beautify the City. She invited Council to attend the committee meetings and to participate in the monthly litter sweeps, which have been occurring for six years.

The Council Members thanked Carol for the Committee's hard work, and they commented on how beautiful it all is.

F. PACE Group - Paxton Taylor, President

(Requesting \$33,000)

Ms. Taylor said the Thomasville City Council has helped PACE achieve their mission of revitalizing Downtown in the past through Street Scapes, building restorations and façade grant programs.

She said about 85% of the requested funds would be used to do five façade grants. She explained that in 2019, they spent \$75,000 on façade grants for 15 different locations. After that, they worked on the building restoration at the Palace Theater. That is now up for sale, so they have time to get back to their façade program.

The other 15% of the requested funds would go to other projects throughout the year, such as the annual shrimp boil, art projects, and community events with Tourism, Beautification, Arts Davidson County and Thomasville Parks and Rec. It would also help with maintenance and operating expenses.

Council Member Williams asked how much a typical façade grant is. Ms. Taylor said the amounts differed in the past, but she thinks they're going to set an allotted amount this time. Mayor York said the largest one that he could recall was \$5,000. It was a matching grant, so the business owner also put in \$5,000 in façade repairs.

Council Member Sellars asked how long the Palace had been on the market. Ms. Taylor said it had been for sale a little over a month. She added that they are getting promotion work out now about their whole process, and are getting the listing out there. Ms. Taylor invited Council to come tour the property.

G. Chair City Multicultural Committee - Jacquez Johnson, Chairman (Requesting \$6,420)

Mr. Johnson said many local governments across the state and nation are making a commitment to advancing equity and inclusion. This includes everything from forming advocacy groups and gathering data to creating new policies and procedures.

He said Thomasville is composed of a diverse variety of residents, including non-English speaking residents and populations of many racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

He defined diversity as a range of human differences, and inclusion as the acceptance and respect of those differences. Inclusion should apply to people of all races, ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, physical abilities, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and social and economic status, etc.

He said the Multicultural Committee is asking for \$6,420 to accomplish the following things:

1. First, they want to promote at least one annual cultural event. He said they are excited to be joining other community partners for their first Juneteenth celebration on June 14th – 15th.
2. They also plan to do meet-and-greets with movie nights. It would be different than the ones run by Parks and Rec. They are going to be choosing very inclusive movies.
3. They also are asking for \$200 for hosting webinars on eliminating racism called Diversity Dialogues. This will give them the opportunity to have very needed conversations and dialogue with the community about diversity and inclusion and how to address challenges in our community. This will be recorded and shared on social media. That will spark those necessary conversations to build inclusivity.
4. Participation in Spring Daze and Everybody's Day to make sure they are visible.

Council Member Thrift recognized that the Multicultural Committee has plans for Juneteenth and contribute to the MLK Black History Month, but he asked if they had plans for any other cultures/ethnicities in Thomasville. Mr. Johnson said they are hoping to have a Hispanic Heritage Festival in September.

Council Member Hunt asked him if the Committee had any funds left over from last year. Mr. Johnson said they do. Some would be used for the candle light vigil this weekend. He said this was an opportunity for them to reach out to the different faiths in Thomasville to properly grieve about Covid losses as a community. City Manager Brandt said as of March 1st, there was \$4,800 remaining in the Multicultural Committee account.

Council Member Thrift asked what else those funds were going to be used for. Mr. Johnson said the Committee members would be put through DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) training.

Council Member Sellars asked if an organization would be hosting the webinars on racism. Mr. Johnson said as chairman of the committee, he would be having a conversation with committee members Dr. Tanisha Watkins and Dr. Candace Jackson. They will be helping to craft those conversations and questions to figure out concrete solutions to some of the equity problems in our community.

Council Member Sellars asked if the Committee was planning on buying their own license for the cultural movie night. Mr. Johnson said \$1,500 of the requested funds would allow them to cover the cost of the licensing without having to partner with other groups.

H. Thomasville Rescue Squad - Rusty Goins, Chief (Requesting \$40,000)

Chief Goins said they typically receive \$25,000 from the City of Thomasville, but with costs escalating, they need more money. (i.e. gloves have gone from \$8 a

box to \$40 a box, not to mention fuel, which they sometimes pay for out of their own pockets.)

They provide service, rescue (from truck accidents to high level accidents to collapse). He said about 20% are technical rescues, which include high level, confined space, water rescue. They also have a national trainer who has given them some equipment/gear, but it is getting old.

He said they are all volunteers, and everything they do is free of charge for the community.

This year, they've started going more out into the community and are getting more involved. They are going to do some open houses to bring the community in. They will let organizations use their building for the benefit of the community.

He also hopes to get more youth interested in volunteering. He does have some juniors, but "volunteerism is a dying art."

His father-in-law started the Thomasville Rescue Squad in 1969. He hopes to build it up, by adding fundraisers such as Bingo night, CPR classes (for only \$30, the price charged by the American Heart Association for the card), and spaghetti dinners, and they plan to apply for grants.

He said they have improved their response times, and they have improved their relationship with the Thomasville Fire Department. They also work tightly with the County Ambulance Service, which is having staffing issues, so many weekends they only have one of their two ambulances staffed in Thomasville. Thomasville Rescue Squad fills in for them and fills that gap when they are needed.

Council Member Shepherd asked how many volunteers they have. Chief Goins said there are 40 volunteers on the roster, but only about 14 are active.

Council Member Williams asked if there are any women volunteers on the Rescue Squad. Chief Goins said there are 10 or 12 women on the roster, but it is open to everyone who wants to do it. He said some of the women are his better responders.

Council Member Thrift asked if they run every medical call. Chief Goins said the CAD system in Lexington delegates who is paged. It's according to the type of call. They can't do them all, due to lack of funding for fuel. If they don't run it, somebody else takes the call. He said the Thomasville Fire Department handles most of the traffic accidents and stuff like that. The Rescue Squad mostly helps EMS with house calls. He estimated that they are able to run 40% of the calls they are given in the City of Thomasville, give or take, depending on variables.

Council Member Sellars asked Chief Goins how he plans to get more young volunteers. He said they make personal visits to high schools and the community college's EMT school to talk to the guidance counsellors and teachers to get leads.

Chief Goins summarized that the requested funds would help them modernize some of their equipment. He said they've been taking care of their equipment, but it is old. For example, their heavy rescue truck is a 1971 model.

Council Member Sellars asked if they get funding from anywhere else besides the City of Thomasville. He answered that Davidson County gives them around \$20,000-\$25,000. But he said it costs them \$100,000 - \$105,000 to keep the doors open.

I. Martin Luther King, Jr. Social Action Committee - Dr. George B. Jackson, Chairman (Requesting \$1,000)

Dr. Jackson said since 2001, the Social Action Committee has presented an 8-day, 13 event celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday. He said, "Our purpose is to continue to promote the unfinished work of Martin Luther King, Jr."

He said since 2004 they have presented a scholarship award program called the Martin Luther King Oratorical Contest which gifts students from around the Piedmont Triad an opportunity to receive cash awards for sharing their oratorical skills to continue Dr. King's oratorical legacy. The first scholarship was \$500. In 2022, the scholarship totals reached \$20,050.


For the past 15 years, Thomasville has given the SAC \$500 per year to supplement the scholarship offerings and other various community programs, such as their "Get the Shot" program this year.


Many media outlets attend this important event, which shows good things coming out of Thomasville, the Seat of Global Opportunity.

He said they have always been true to their word and have delivered what they promote. They give scholarships to students from various high schools in the Piedmont Triad. They bring their families from as far away as Danville, VA and Columbia, SC to Thomasville to be a part of this event.

He said, "Each year we ask for \$1,000 in support for this event. Each year we receive \$500. So we just keep asking for \$1,000 and hope one day that point might get across."

3. Adjournment – Council Member Sellars moved to adjourn. Council Member Shell seconded the motion. No discussion. *Motion unanimously approved 6 – 0.*


Raleigh York, Jr., Mayor


Wendy S. Martin, City Clerk