

// A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Lynchburg was held on the 28th day of April, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Treney Tweedy, President, presiding. The following members were present:

Present: Mary Jane Dolan, Jeff Helgeson, J. Randy Nelson, E. J. Turner Perrow, Sterling A. Wilder,

Beau Wright, Treney Tweedy 7

Absent: 0

// In the matter of Budget, Council heard a presentation on budget revisions as a result of COVID-19. Ms. Svrcek said that first and foremost, we still have citizens to serve and a City to maintain with direct and indirect services. Historical trends do not apply and with regard to future trends, we know a little more with each passing month. Items that we do not know are what will happen with our anchor institutions. The colleges, universities and the hospital are doing things differently. We do not know how many college students will return to campus. There is uncertainty regarding whether people will continue to work remotely versus in a brick and mortar office. There is uncertainty regarding the impacts of reductions by the State, particularly for annual police funding (\$3.1 million), Personal Property Tax Reduction Subsidy (\$5.5 million), Highway Maintenance (\$9 million) and Education funding. We do not know the impacts of changes in consumer behavior. There is the potential of Council to make changes to tax rates. There is the uncertainty of when a vaccine will be available and the economic impact should there be a reoccurrence of the virus.

Councilmember Nelson asked if it was possible, if not too burdensome, to get some preliminary information from businesses even though it is not time for them to report their receipts. Dr. Reid Wodicka said they have been getting anecdotal information from businesses by using surveys and they were falling in line with their expectations. Ms. Witt covered the sources of information they used for forming their projections. Since the last meeting, they have added information from the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia Restaurant and Lodging Association. Councilmember Perrow asked if the Lynchburg Business Alliance has been a source of information. Ms. Svrcek said they have been holding briefings called “Wednesdays at One.” He asked if there is a way we could use them to poll some of the businesses. Ms. Witt said she talks to Marjette Upshur on a weekly basis, as they are a long-term recovery team together. Both the Alliance and the EDA should be on this list.

Councilmember Helgeson thinks you can tell what is going on by driving by the empty parking lots of the businesses and the colleges. He thinks we need to start lobbying to do something different as Lynchburg because we only five people in the hospital out of 82,000 residents. He thinks we need to do something different like was done yesterday when the governor tried to use his authority to unconstitutionally usurp something and was stopped by the court. He would like them to do something proactively but safely. Councilmember Perrow noted that he received an email sent to Virginia First Cities asking what steps can be taken to come out of this. The idea of regionalizing has been put forth because what is a problem for Fairfax or Arlington is not necessarily a problem for Bristol or Lynchburg. Councilmember Helgeson noted this is a medical crisis for hospitals. UVA has cut salaries and furloughing 20 percent of its personnel. If UVA is furloughing in a medical pandemic, something seems very askew to him. He thinks they need to look at some factual analysis and not just stoke fear.

Councilmember Nelson thinks Councilmember Helgeson makes some points. We have to make decisions based on the mindset of our citizens and businesses. It has been pointed out that we need to rely on data and data is

scientific evidence. That is what we need and what has been promoted. We need to do testing. That confidence and information will facilitate people going back to restaurants and businesses knowing they can do so safely. Until we have that information is known and there is the ability to track contact, everyone is going to have the fear that will shut us all down. The formula has been laid out by scientists and medical people who know and we should not rely on speculation. Just pushing a button and saying we are ready to go is not going to be the solution.

Ms. Witt provided them with the unemployment data for Lynchburg. We are very similar to other cities in Virginia and are kind of in the middle of the pack. She also provided them with the Central Virginia Workforce Development Area top ten occupations with greatest number of initial unemployment claims. No surprise is that the food industry is the top one and administrative positions being second. There are just over 5,000 in Lynchburg in the initial unemployment numbers. They use 32,000 as the number for the Lynchburg workforce. Councilmember Helgeson noted that means that about 15 percent of our workforce has been forcibly unemployed in the last few weeks.

Ms. Witt had a slide showing the president's guidelines for opening up America again. Before we can start Phase 1, we need a downward trajectory in cases for 14 days. They used this data for their assumptions for revenues. Ms. Witt noted that they are paying really close attention to what the governor is saying about whether regions can open up when they have reached Phase 1 but for now we have to go on what the president has outlined.

For the big picture revenue assumptions, the first quarter assumes Virginia moves from Phase 1 to Phase 3 by the end of the quarter, which includes most businesses open with relaxed social distancing. Second quarter assumes Phase 3 continues with social distancing and consumer behavior driven by individual health concerns. Businesses are pretty much open. Third and fourth quarters are based on anticipating more "normal" consumer spending.

Ms. Witt noted that grocery store and home improvement sales are up, as well as online sales. Restaurants with quick service or drive through are holding steady. Full service restaurants that changed to curbside pickup and/or delivery are down. She then went through the conservative, meaning worst case scenario, assumptions they have made for the economic impacts of COVID-19 on FY2021 revenue projections.

Councilmember Wright asked how the projected decline in revenue correlates to the 2008 recession. Ms. Witt said that was different. She cannot tell them the overall decline. Our consumption revenues were really impacted but it was different. He asked if it was worse and Ms. Witt and Ms. Svrcek said no. Councilmember Perrow noted it was more of a slow drain and we had to shrink the City budget. This is kind of a sudden shock and he is concerned about cash flow. Ms. Witt said she has two staff members continuously monitoring money coming in and going out to make sure what we are projecting is even feasible. We are good until the end of this fiscal year and we are also projecting out to the end of the calendar year. The May and June collections are so important though because they get us through the summer and fall and to our next due date in November.

She covered the revenue projections for dedicated revenues and then the sources they propose to use to balance the FY2021 proposed budget: \$2,015,952 from a loss in the 3 percent general wage increase; \$946,481 from a delay in Phase II of the Korn-Ferry market adjustment; \$1,142,346 from a one-time transfer from GLTC City Operating savings due to additional federal funds available through the CARES Act; \$30,142 from eliminating City Council salary increases; \$75,000 from reducing funding for implementing Safety and Security Task Force recommendations

leaving a budget of \$50,000; \$50,000 from eliminating health insurance consultant for employees; \$700,000 from reducing the transfer to Lynchburg City Schools; \$75,000 from Economic Development eliminating funding for 2040 Master Plan \$60,000 from eliminating Public Works mini sweeper and \$2,760 from reduced hours for part-time Volunteer Coordinator position at the library.

Councilmember Wright asked what the alignment with Schools is regarding the proposed reduction of \$700,000. Ms. Svrcek said they knew they needed to spread the impact quite frankly and they arrived at this number. Quite honestly, she has not had a conversation with the superintendent regarding it until today. Councilmember Wright would not be comfortable with it without consulting with Schools and would like it added to the "list."

Additional sources to balance the budget are \$34,986 from eliminating a new part-time police accreditation position; \$39,773 from eliminating a new part-time fire accreditation position; \$12,383 from delaying the start of new Parks & Recreation positions for a neighborhood center until October 1, 2020; \$61,315 from a delay in starting three new full-time Social Services positions (local savings) until January 1, 2021; \$500,000 comes from eliminating the additional money for the Task Force on the Future of PreK-12 Education and Beyond reserve and the use of \$700,000 of the Task Force on the Future of PreK-12 Education and Beyond reserve for a total of \$6,446,138 in expenditure reductions and use of reserves.

Councilmember Helgeson asked if there were any other studies or master plans that they could look at postponing. Staff could only think of a Parks & Recreation study that is in pay-as-you-go money. Councilmember Helgeson said it would look through to see if they could find any "low hanging fruit." Ms. Svrcek said they are looking at doing some of the implementation of the Economic Development 2040 Master Plan in-house. Mayor Tweedy asked if there is an economic recovery plan from the pandemic. Ms. Svrcek said there is a long-term recovery group that meets once a week and it is a work in progress.

Ms. Witt explained that they will be monitoring revenues very closely. Following receipt of July 2020 meals, lodging and amusement taxes on September 21 and sales tax on October 5, staff will have a better idea of how consumer driven taxes are performing. Staff will provide an update at the October 13, 2020 Council work session. Expenditure adjustments will be proposed to Council on October 13 if the economy is not improving. She will also be giving a monthly report at Finance Committee. Ms. Svrcek indicated they would also update Council at the second meeting of each month.

There are several things that they will know by October that will help them project revenues going forward such as FY2020 business license payments due May 20, FY2020 personal property tax payments due June 5, FY2020 real estate tax payments due May 15, July meals, lodging, amusement and sales tax payments, September meals, lodging and amusement tax payments and October 5 sales tax payments. We will have a better understanding of consumer behavior, college enrollment and return of students, rescheduled college graduations and the status of Lynchburg City Schools.

If the economy is not improving by October, the hiring, spending, training and travel freeze will be extended. We might need to use the Fund Balance above 10% (\$1,100,000). There could be a possible return of additional GLTC funds, if available (\$500,000). We could reduce General Fund Pay-as-you-go Capital Improvement Program

projects. Staff furlough days may need to be taken. There could be other sources of expenditure reduction or revenues to be determined. Councilmember Helgeson asked if the furlough days would apply to public safety employees. Ms. Svrcek said that would be her recommendation.

Councilmember Nelson noted that until testing and contact tracing is more robust, the consumer confidence to go out could be marginal. He asked Ms. Witt if there had been any discussion about testing in her meetings with other financial officers and she said that they had heard that hopefully by early summer the testing will be ramped up. He asked if any of the universities are implementing any requirements that students have to be tested or vaccinated before returning. She said she had read an article that all the major colleges are meeting to determine what that might look like in terms of students returning. They are all looking at different scenarios. It could be disastrous if the public perceives that the colleges are not doing that here in terms of wanting to go out to businesses. We should probably have a conversation with our college presidents regarding their plans. Councilmember Helgeson thinks the testing has gone up tremendously. He also pointed out that you can test one day negative and then get the virus the next day. He also hopes they do not go down the path of vilifying a select group of people. The paper said that a certain school was reckless and he went there and it was a ghost town. We are all in this together and we cannot be attacking a piece of our economy. We really do appreciate 15,000 students that come here and help fund our budget. He is sure they want to be healthy just like we all do. He thinks we all care about our safety and our health. Councilmember noted that the college students are certainly a viable part of our community. He just meant that he would like them to be here in a safe manner and he thinks the college presidents should be having conversations about how that will happen. He does not think anyone is trying to vilify anyone. It is a comfort and security level that he is seeking.

Councilmember Wright stated that it is a fact that we do not have enough testing in Virginia. If we want people to feel comfortable opening their businesses and consumers to go out into the marketplace, they need the assurance that they can be readily tested. He wants the public watching to know that Lynchburg believes in science and evidence and data. It is not just about what feels good and we will look to the public health experts and epidemiologists for thoughtful, studied recommendations before we do anything with our most precious resource, which is our people.

Mayor Tweedy thinks that because social distancing guidelines are so stringent and the conversation about reckless decisions was brought up early, the impact on our community has been minimized. That is a good thing because she knows people that are personally affected. She knows that life matter and we have the opportunity to preserve life and safety and have precaution in our leadership roles. She will do everything she needs to do to protect citizens and their lives. We can't go to restaurants if we are six feet under. She does not have an expendable number of citizens that are expendable in our City no matter their length of residency.

Ms. Witt will also give an update at the January 12, 2021 Council meeting if the economy is not improving. They would suggest extending the hiring freeze (managed vacancy savings), extend spending freeze, extend training and travel freeze, eliminate any remaining General Fund Pay-as-you-go Capital Improvement Program projects, consider additional staff furlough days, consider a reduction in force, including related service delivery impacts. There could other expenditures reductions and sources for revenue to be determined.

Councilmember Wilder commented that he is sorry that the three percent raises and Korn Ferry salary adjustments are being cut. He asked if there any way possible we can make adjustments to salaries or give a bonus if we see revenues are better later in the year. Ms. Witt said that would certainly be possible and it would be a Council decision. Ms. Svrcek would suggest they mention things they would like on a “list” to be considered in mid-year FY2021. He asked if schools have been consulted about the \$2.2 million they are suggesting be taken from their budget. Ms. Witt said they talked about the initial \$1.5 million but not the additional \$700,000. Councilmember Wilder would like the entire \$2.2 million added to the “list.” He would like to hear from the school superintendent as to the impact this will have on their budget.

Councilmember Wilder asked about the increase in the trash fee. Ms. Svrcek said that will be on the agenda for next week’s work session.

Councilmember Perrow would like to see the City’s portion of the school budget for the past several years so they can see the recent history. Ms. Svrcek said she will provide that to them.

Councilmember Helgeson would like them to look at some reduction in force. UVA just announced today that they are cutting administrative salaries and positions by 20 percent. He would like them to look at the ones that are actually delivering services such as the firefighters, police, teacher and trash collectors but cut some of the administrative positions or salaries. In his tenure, he has never seen a zero base budget that looks at what we actually need. Things just seem to incrementally go up. He would suggest they keep “the boots on the ground” and possibly pay them more but cut some of the administration. There is some administration that is needed but there are probably things that we could do. They have listed these things as possibly being done in January 2021 but he would suggest they need to be done now. He does not want to impact the services to citizens but we could get rid of some of the middle stuff.

Ms. Svrcek would say that for years City departments have been working at the margins from top to bottom. If there were fat in this budget, Council would have cut it by now. She does not believe they have a “fat” budget to say the least. Everyone is busy doing the work that Council has expected them to do. They may do some furlough days, if necessary, but they are hoping there does not have to be a reduction in force, quite frankly. Council needs to tell them if there are certain positions they want them to look at. The budget was zero based during the time of Kim Payne. Frankly, every year she has been the City Manager she has typically asked departments to submit a budget with less funding than the previous year. They have increased salaries to try to keep up with the market. It breaks her heart that they cannot go forward with the three percent increase and implementation of Phase 2 of the Korn Ferry study. We fought hard to do that study and to have Council support it. Frankly, she takes offense that he thinks that there is wasted taxpayer dollars in this budget. They do not believe there is and Council needs to tell them if they want to cut a particular service.

Councilmember Helgeson thinks a lot of administrative things have grown over the years and he noted that not all department heads live in the City. Ms. Svrcek said more and more of them do as she has hired them. He suggested consolidated more divisions like they did with Economic Development, Tourism and Museums. He would like them to hone through it in light of what UVA did today. Ms. Svrcek said they are not a hospital and she does not think that is a fair comparison.

Mayor Tweedy noted that some companies have been able to have their CEOs take a 90 percent cut and still be able to pay their people. For more budget seasons now, she has seen “apples compared to oranges.” It would be constructive if people said cut services. You need supervisors and administrators to run departments. The idea is grand as a PR point to say “let’s cut fat” or “let’s cut level of management.” It sounds good to some ears but it is not reality. We are looking at life, death and reality and how we are going to look on the other side of a pandemic and not just pandering to someone that wants to hear something that “tickles their ears.” These people that have been front line through the pandemic we are now saying cannot get a raise. We praise them but then tell them they are not worth the money we put aside.

Councilmember Helgeson said he takes offense when she keeps saying he is pandering. He brought up something to the City Manager. She said he is comparing “apples to oranges” and he said absolutely not. She said she attacks just like she did with Liberty University. Speaking of pandering, he held up the newspaper where she had called Liberty University reckless and she did not even go over there. He is bringing up things that are important because our restaurants and businesses have done that. Mayor Tweedy acknowledged that she did call something reckless to someone who lied to her and the City Manager. He said he brought it up and if she does not like it to vote against it. She asked him to bring up something constructive and maybe they can agree with it. He would like her to be the leader and quit attacking a Councilmember. She asked him to quit being a weak Councilmember that she has to attack.

Councilmember Perrow said she needed to move on and she said she did not need to move on if she thinks people are pandering and attacking the City staff and attacking the budget they have brought and the decisions they have made, she has the right to defend it.

Councilmember Nelson thinks that the points made have been well articulated. He thinks the public and he understand both. In terms of the budget and the task before them, they need to move on. She would agree and they need to stick to the presentation.

Councilmember Perrow suggested they talk about “the list.” There are several items on the list that would add dollars to the budget and he does not think it is appropriate to discuss them at this time. He would suggest they strike items nine through 19 and 31. Councilmember Helgeson seconded the motion. Councilmember Wright would like to remove items 11, 12 and 31 and made that as a friendly amendment. Councilmembers Perrow and Helgeson accepted that amendment. He said these were items that some of Council thought they could support but obviously the funding is not there. It hurts him to not support these at this time but he would like to see these items returned to the future “list.” Councilmember Wright said it is unfortunate not to be able to support some of these items and in any other budget cycle, these would be incredibly serious items for conversation.

Councilmember Nelson wanted to have some discussion about item 19 because that deals with service to one of our most rapidly growing parts of the City. There would be a net savings to the fire department in the overtime they do not have to pay. Councilmembers Perrow and Helgeson accepted that amendment. Councilmember Nelson said three months all of these items would have been legitimate and viable topics for discussion but the economic landscape has changed so drastically.

Councilmember Helgeson is glad item 19 was pulled. When we are having tradeoffs like this, we really have to fixate and focus. It is not pandering. It is making sure our citizens are safe. If there is a way we could cut so we can add those desperately needed “boots on the ground,” that is what he would like to see them do.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes: Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright, Tweedy 7

Absent: 0

Councilmember Helgeson made a motion to accept stricken items 1 through 4, which are staff adjustments. Councilmember Wright asked what the \$75,000 (item 4) includes and Dr. Wodicka thinks it is a number of place making initiatives, beautification and things like that, throughout downtown. Councilmembers Wright would like this item to be added to the future “list.” Council did not request items 2 or 3 be on the future “list.” The motion was seconded by Councilmember Helgeson and passed by the following vote:

Ayes: Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright, Tweedy 7

Noes: 0

Rather than discuss item 5, Councilmember Perrow suggested they talk about big ticket items to see if they are willing to make the decisions necessary to fund these items. Councilmember Wright suggested they start with item 19, the nine additional firefighters. Councilmember Helgeson noted they will have to do the same if they want to add back the \$2.2 million for schools. Mayor Tweedy suggested they start at item 5 and go down the list. Council was in consensus to do it this way. Councilmember Perrow made a motion to keep the deduction of \$37,148 from Parks & Recreation. Councilmember Helgeson seconded the motion. Ms. Svrcek said Council needs to understand it will delay the reopening of the College Hill center, which is currently delayed until October. Councilmember Nelson said we are not sure when groups can gather in large groups and for that reason he would support this motion and look at it in September. Councilmember Wilder is hesitant to remove it because it could be challenging to get it back. Mayor Tweedy felt this could be “double cutting” one of the most vulnerable populations, if cuts are also made to the schools budget. She would like to see what it would look like because it is her understanding that schools is partnering with the centers to help students reenter in the fall. Councilmember Nelson is an ardent supporter of the centers, but we are not even sure if the schools are going to reopen in the fall. We will have a “litmus test” in the summer and early fall to see what staff and facilities are required or not required. Councilmember Helgeson noted they are new positions but Ms. Svrcek noted positions were moved from College Hill to Jefferson Park Center.

Councilmember Wright wanted to know where the \$380,043 came from with regard to the Use of Reserve Committed/Assigned Fund Balance. Ms. Witt said it the net of the money reduced from the Schools Task Force (\$700,000) and the \$319, 957 we put back from GLTC.

Councilmember Perrow noted that Councilmember Nelson helped him become a supporter of the centers as well in recent years when he worked with the Boys & Girls Club. But if we are going to add things, we have to make some tough decisions. He noted that the reopening is already delayed until October, and we do not know if we will be able to have large groups together at that time or if schools are going to reopen in the fall. Mayor Tweedy asked if the internet would be cut as well. Ms. Svrcek reiterated that the center cannot open at all if it is not staffed.

Ms. Jenny Jones clarified that this center is a neighborhood internet hotspot. Councilmember Nelson noted they could leave \$795 in the budget to cover the internet service. She also clarified for them that it is necessary to have two persons in the centers at all times for safety reasons. Councilmember Wright said he would not be in favor of removing funding for this center because the centers are so important to the fabric of neighborhoods. Vice Mayor Dolan wondered if this item could be put on the future “list” and they delay the reopening until maybe January. Ms. Svrcek said they could do that and bring it back as resources become available. Councilmember Wilder said he is not comfortable with taking money away from a center, particularly in the ward that he represents.

The motion failed by the following vote:

Ayes:	Nelson, Perrow, Helgeson	4
Noes:	Wilder, Wright, Tweedy, Dolan	3

The discussion moved to item 6, \$50,000 for Safety and Security Task Force. A motion was made by Councilmember Helgeson and seconded by Councilmember Wright to strike this item. They were both satisfied with staff’s recommendation on this so the money can be used somewhere else. Mayor Tweedy asked what this will do to the efforts to make the buildings safer and more secure. Ms. Svrcek noted the first measures were supposed to add some additional safety measure to City Hall in particular. Councilmember Perrow commented it is not preferred to put this off but putting it off a year will not be the end of the world. It should certainly be implemented in future years. if she received the amount of overtime spent on the Fire Department. She mentioned that she might have sent the request by email. Ms. Svrcek said she would get that information to Council.

Ayes:	Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright	7
Noes:		0

The discussion moved to item 7, \$93,789 Chief Talent Development Officer full-time position (\$93,789) transferred to the Council/Manager Offices from Human Resources. Councilmember Helgeson made a motion to accept this as a deduction to the budget. Councilmember Perrow seconded the motion and asked for clarification that there was an offsetting deduction in Human Resources. Ms. Svrcek said that was correct. The transfer was made so they could work more closely with this trainer and she asked them to keep this already filled position. It is even more important for us to have this position when we are cutting trainings and conferences for employees.

Mayor Tweedy thinks we need our employment related positions in this unprecedented time of unemployment and uncertainty. Mayor Tweedy clarified for Councilmember Perrow that this is a trainer position and not a recruitment position. He said since this was an even swap with another department’s budget, he would support the City Manager. Councilmember Helgeson said he would not speak against his own motion and was told it could be withdrawn. He declined to do so.

Ayes:	Helgeson	1
Noes:	Dolan, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright	6

The discussion moved to item 8, C 68,074 Youth Futures Coordinator full-time position transferred to the Council/Manager Office from Human Services - Juvenile Services. Ms. Svrcek explained this position works with the Mayor’s Youth Council, the Youth Services Advisory Board and helps get youth prepared for the work force, which is really part of the poverty initiative. It is a filled position and has been filled for about a year.

Councilmember Helgeson made a motion to remove the position. There was no second to the motion and it failed due to a lack of a motion. The position stays in the budget.

The discussion moved to item 19. Since the regular meeting was scheduled to start at 6:00 and we have guests present for that meeting, Ms. Svrcek suggested they pick up here at our next meeting on May 5, 2019. Ms. Svrcek noted they will figure out the net of the overtime saved by not having to pay current firefighters weighed against the cost of the nine additional firefighters before that meeting.

// Roll call was postponed until after the regular meeting.

// The meeting recessed at 6:05 p.m.

// City Council reconvened the meeting at 6:15 p.m. The following members were present:

Present: Mary Jane Dolan, Jeff Helgeson, J. Randy Nelson, E. J. Turner Perrow, Sterling Wilder,
Beau Wright, Treney Tweedy 7

Absent: 0

// Councilmember Wilder gave the Invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

// In the matter of Recognitions, Mayor Tweedy read a proclamation recognizing National Economic Development Week, National Travel and Tourism Week and National Small Business Week. Ms. Marjette Upshur gave some comments commending our businesses on their ingenuity and kindness during this difficult time. Her office remains focused on promoting and supporting the Lynchburg business community. They continue to invest in the local employers. They are hosting the Spring Co-Starters class virtually. They have started an “I am Lynchburg” campaign to highlight businesses and employees. All of us will be needed to serve on the front lines of recovery. We will get through this unprecedented time together. When the clouds lift, and they will, we will continue to work to make Lynchburg “the best small City in America.”

// In the matter of Recognitions, several firefighters were recognized with Certificates of Valor. Communications and Public Engagement put together a video regarding extinguishing a fire and rescue of two children at James Crossing Apartments on April 13, 2020. Chief Greg Wormser had comments of accolade for his staff and thanked Council for its support. Councilmember Wilder also thanked them. He understands their importance to the community. It is important for us to be sensitive to each other. He had some suggestions to show them support such as cooking them a meal or sending them a gift basket. You could also show dual support for a restaurant by taking the first responders or healthcare workers a meal from a local restaurant.

Mayor Tweedy said they see them and appreciate what they do for our community. Your courage and bravery takes special people with special hearts and training. Certificates of Valor were presented to Battalion Chief Ricky Bomar, Firefighter Toby Bouyea, Master Firefighter Wayne Casto, Firefighter Darryl DuBose, Firefighter Timothy Greenway, Battalion Chief David Jackson, Firefighter Tammy Kelly, Master Firefighter Patrick Madigan, Captain Matt Milner, Master Firefighter Holly Shackelford, Firefighter Christopher Wilmouth.

// In the matter of Consent Agenda, Councilmember Perrow made a motion to approve it, which was seconded by Councilmember Helgeson. The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes: Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright 7

Noes: 0

// In the matter of Budget, Consideration of introducing a resolution to amend the FY 2020 City/Federal/State Aid Fund budget and appropriate \$112,531 with resources from the 2020 Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program to purchase COVID-19 related Equipment, Decontamination Services, Supplies, Overtime & Fringe Benefits expenditures. Councilmember Helgeson made a motion for approval. This item requires no local match, so it did not go to Finance Committee. Councilmember Nelson seconded the motion and it passed by the following vote:

Ayes: Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright 7

Noes: 0

// In the matter of Budget, Council considered introducing an uncodified ordinance amending City Code to delay the assessment of the penalty that is normally assessed for the late payment of real estate taxes for the period of May 16, 2020, through June 30, 2020. For reference, she said \$144,693 was assessed for penalties in FY2019.

Councilmember Perrow moved the ordinance, which was seconded by Councilmember Helgeson. Councilmember Perrow understands that staff is not in support of this but also understands that staff has been very conservative in its view of how money has been managed this time. He commented that only \$60,000 of that assessed penalty was collected before June 30, 2019. Ms. Witt clarified that we budget for penalties and interest. Councilmember Perrow clarified that it does not the due date or interest. He thinks it is a good will gesture and something they can do without jeopardizing an enormous amount of funds.

Councilmember Nelson commented that they will have to come up with the \$60,000 somehow for FY2020, if this is approved. He commented that you hear what the state and federal government are doing and this is one of the small nuances where we have some flexibility to do something as a City. Councilmember Perrow said he was speaking with a citizen, Norman Moon, who had made this suggestion. Councilmember Nelson noted that commercial property owners do not pay through escrow and this will likely affect them more than an individual taxpayer.

Ms. Witt clarified for Councilmember Wright that the cash flow that would be affected would be cash flow for FY2020, as the assess penalty would be for FY2020 real estate payments. The penalty would have to be paid if it was not paid by July 1, 2020 and that would be cash flow for FY2021. Councilmember Wright wondered how this would affect the City if people took them up on this and delayed their payment. Ms. Witt clarified that banks will make the payments if the money is in escrow. Ms. Witt said she is concerned with the impact on cash flow. She believes the money will get collected eventually but people may choose to put it off longer than usual. She also clarified that interest would still be due. Councilmember Helgeson thinks it should be waived both for economic relief reasons and also because it will be difficult to figure out the bills. Ms. Witt said the system calculates everything for them. It gets billed in their next installment.

Councilmember Wright is not sure he is comfortable with deciding on this tonight. He is wondering if they could do something like they are doing with the small business loans wherein the applicant has to certify that they need some COVID related relief. It does not have to be stringent but could hold them accountable on an honor system. Vice Mayor Dolan commented that Hampton is doing this but they have to apply by a certain date and show it is related to COVID. Councilmember Perrow said he was trying to limit the operational effort and not make

any more work for staff. Councilmember Wright asked if staff could bring it back next week with the commercial and residential properties broken out and an estimate of what deferring the interest as well would cost us. Ms. Witt said the longer you take to decide on this, the less people will know to take advantage of it, as the bills have already been mailed.

Councilmember Nelson is in favor of no penalty because imposing a penalty right now on businesses and property owner while they are down is doing harm. He does not believe the City taxpayers should be financing anyone's enterprise and we would making an interest free loan if we waive the interest. He is not in favor of that.

Mayor Tweedy called for a motion that is on the floor. Councilmember Helgeson thinks it is a small and they would not have to recalculate bills. Councilmember Nelson said he could not support that because it is based on principle and not the amount of money. Councilmember Wright said he could support this motion. He noted that he could not find the penalty and interest structure on the website without going into each property's individual assessment information.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes: Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright 7

Noes: 0

// In the matter of Consider adopting an ordinance establishing procedures for holding electronic meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to ensure the continuity of City government. Mr. Erwin outlined the ordinance he and Councilmember Nelson worked on together that has been presented to Council for consideration. Councilmember Nelson noted the meeting can only be for matters directly related to the emergency or to resolve the emergency or to deal with issues that have a deadline that must be dealt with by Council before the next regularly scheduled meeting. The justification has to be explained and included in the minutes. Councilmember Wright moved the ordinance, which was seconded by Councilmember Nelson. Councilmember Wright said it was thoughtfully worded and raises the bar for meetings to be held electronically.

Councilmember Perrow said it specifically ties it to the COVID-19 pandemic or it will have to be reinstated after six months. He is a little concerned with the term "exceptional condition." We were supposed to get through this budget before May 15 according to their previous schedule. He reset his family vacation based on that and he wonders if that constitutes an "exceptional condition." He wondered if he would be allowed to participate electronically. He would like to offer as a motion to strike the phrase "exceptional condition" as a friendly amendment. Councilmember Nelson said his main intent was not to make it convenient and the word was compelling enough that the majority of Council would have to find it as something legitimate. Councilmember Helgeson does not think it should be up to the rest of Council to decide that someone has met some arbitrary threshold. Councilmember Nelson thinks the Councilmember would let them know ahead of time and convince at least four of them that it was a legitimate reason that he or she needed to miss. Councilmember Perrow's reason would be good enough for him under the circumstances. Councilmember Helgeson would not want to have to disclose a medical condition that he wants to keep private. Councilmember Wright said they could strike the word but it would still be up to the other Councilmembers to decide. Councilmember Perrow hoped they could get the budget approved by March 12 and then he could miss the March 19th meeting. Ms. Svrcek said there is no meeting

on the 19th due to the Council election. Councilmember Perrow said he would come back for the meeting on March 26th. Councilmember Wright agreed to remove the word “exceptional” as a friendly amendment and the motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes:	Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright	7
Noes:		0

// On motion of Councilmember Wilder, seconded by Vice Mayor Dolan, by the following recorded vote elected to hold a closed meeting to for the discussion and consideration of prospective candidates for the position of City Manager pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A.) (1) of the Code of Virginia.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes:	Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright	7
Nos:		0

// The meeting was re-opened to the public.

Councilmember Helgeson made the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Lynchburg has convened a closed meeting on this date, pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by City Council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Lynchburg certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by Council.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Perrow, and Council by the following recorded vote adopted the motion:

Ayes:	Dolan, Helgeson, Nelson, Perrow, Tweedy, Wilder, Wright	7
Noes:		0

// The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Clerk of Council