

April 25, 2023

// A special meeting of the Council of the City of Lynchburg was held on the 25th day of April 2023, at 4:00 p.m. at the 2nd Floor Training Room, City Hall, Stephanie Reed, President, presiding. The following Members of the Council were present:

Present: Stephanie Reed, Sterling Wilder, Jeff Helgeson, Marty Misjuns, Larry Taylor,	
MaryJane Dolan	6
Absent: Chris Faraldi	1

// In the matter of Work Session Agenda Overview, City Manager Mr. Wynter Benda proposed moving the Business Item Briefings forward in the agenda to provide more time for the budget reconciliation discussion. He noted that since the last meeting, they had been able to hire a new director in the Communications Department, Ms. Anna Benson.

// In the matter of Planning, Agenda Item #1, Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Child and Adult Day Care Centers, Mr. Kevin Henry provided a presentation to the Council.

The zoning ordinance amendments were initiated by staff on March 1, 2023, due to several proposed day cares not being able to meet the minimum standards of Section 35.2-72.8 of the zoning ordinance. Currently, the Zoning Ordinance requires day care centers located in commercial districts to meet the same frontage requirements (amount of property boarding a city street) and land area as those located in residential districts. The frontage requirements and land area requirements are problematic for commercially zoned day care centers and for small day care centers in residential zones. The current standards have prevented new day care centers from opening in both commercial and residential zones or required them to request a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). All day care centers must meet the Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers required by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Social Services, regardless of City frontage and land area requirements.

// In the matter of the School Board Appointment Process, Agenda Item #2, Clerk of Council Ms. Alicia L. Finney provided an overview of the proposed schedule for the 2023 appointment process. This year, City Council has elected to hold the entirety of the School Board appointment process in open session.

Outlined below is the proposed schedule:

- May 9, 2023 - Conduct a public hearing to receive citizen input regarding potential candidates

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- May 23, 2023 - Continuation of a public hearing to receive citizen input regarding potential candidates. At the close of the public hearing and while remaining in open session, Council will review and discuss applications filed with the Clerk of Council to determine those individuals to interview.
- Week of June 5, 2023 - Hold a slate of special meetings for the purpose of conducting interviews with candidates. These will be live streamed as well as open to the public.
- June 13, 2023 - City Council will discuss candidates during General Business and appoint three members to the School Board for new terms commencing July 1, 2023 and expiring June 30, 2026.

Councilmember Wilder stated that he would be absent the whole week of June 5.

// In the matter of Budget, Agenda Item #3, The City Council Initiated Decrease of the City's real estate tax rate from \$1.11/\$100 to \$0.89/\$100, City Attorney Mr. Matthew Freedman provided an overview of the matter to the Council and noted that the City Manager and Commissioner of Revenues were available to answer questions. As requested by the City Council, a proposed ordinance accompanied the agenda summary for review and discussion. Such an ordinance, if adopted, in addition to needed technical revisions, would reduce the City's real estate tax rate from \$1.11/\$100 of real estate value (including improvements) to \$0.89/\$100 of real estate value (including improvements) - The effects upon the City associated with such a proposed reduction have been made known to the City Council during individual meetings between the City Manager (or his designee) and Councilmembers, written and publicized answers to questions and/or requests from City Councilmembers, work sessions concerning the reconciliation of the proposed FY24 budget, and other information provided to the City Council from the City Manager and/or his staff. The proposed ordinance, if adopted, would be effective July 1, 2023, but apply retroactively to public service corporations as of January 1, 2023.

Councilmember Helgeson said that the amendment process could have been easier and quicker, but he was happy to have the amendments included moving forward.

Councilmember Wilder said he did not support the \$0.89 rate, and he supported the City Manager's proposed rate of \$1.05. He said that there were needs in the City, community, and school system that needed funding. He said that he wanted to provide salary increases to City staff because the

City needed to increase retention and recruitment. He said that the City was thriving because of the investments from prior councils, and the City was growing because of investment from the Council.

Councilmember Dolan stated that she did not support the proposed \$0.89 rate.

// In the matter of Lynchburg City Schools, Agenda Item #4, Lynchburg City Schools Facilities Plan Community Engagement, Director of Community Development Mr. Kent White provided a presentation to the Council. At the March 28, 2023, joint City Council-School Board meeting, staff discussed the process for the development of the school facilities master plan. During the first week of May, there will be three (3) in-person feedback sessions for the consulting firm, MGT, to gather community feedback about the plan. The schedule for the community feedback sessions is: Monday, May 1, 2023 at 6 PM, Bedford Hills Elementary; Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 6 PM, T. C. Miller Elementary; Thursday, May 4, 2023 at 6 PM, Heritage Elementary.

There will be other opportunities for feedback outside of these sessions, both online and at "pop up" events. MGT will use this feedback, coupled with stakeholder interviews and data from their environmental scan, to craft alternatives for school renovation, construction, consolidation, and programming. The draft alternatives will be released in June and the community will have opportunities to comment through in-person and online forums ahead of the next City Council/School Board joint meeting on August 8, 2023.

Councilmember Helgeson said that they should consider consolidating schools because it was critical to be efficient with taxpayer resources. He said he hoped that the report would be done objectively and factually.

Councilmember Taylor said he supported consolidation, but it was important to keep students and their schools close to their homes.

Councilmember Misjuns said that it would be good to keep students closer to their homes. He said he had discussed with the consultant limiting the expansion of government schools as buildings became available. He said they should consider opportunities for private-public partnerships to utilize the school buildings to fulfill the school needs without relying on taxpayer funding.

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Councilmember Wilder noted that the school system had changed drastically over the past 20 years and now provided different, comprehensive services to the students than it did in the past. He said that the City demographics had changed and so too had their needs.

// In the matter of the Budget, Agenda Item #5, FY 2024 Budget Reconciliation, City Manager Mr. Wynter C. Benda stated that Chief Financial Officer Ms. Donna Witt would provide a presentation to the Council, and Deputy City Manager Mr. Greg Patrick was available for questions.

Councilmember Helgeson said that the budget for the schools should be reduced because the school population had decreased, and the City was receiving increased funding from the state due to the composite index. He said that other departments were requested to reduce their budgets, so the school budget should be flat-funded to further reduce the burden on the taxpayers. Ms. Witt responded that they would still need to perform the department budget cuts even if they flat-funded schools to close the budget gap. Councilmember Helgeson said that they needed to level fund the schools with a reduction based on the \$39.5M FY 23 budget, not the proposed budget. He clarified that reducing the school budget from the proposed \$40.7M to \$39.5M would be a \$1.2M, or 3%, reduction. He said that the state was providing an additional \$6.8M in funding for schools. Mr. Patrick responded that over two years, the 2022 to 2023 increase was about \$4.7M, and the 2023 to 2024 increase was to be determined. He noted that the Governor proposed \$4.3M, but the adopted "skinny budget" included about \$2.6M. He noted that the House proposed under \$4M, and the Senate proposed \$6.8M. He said that there would likely be a \$3M to \$4M increase from 2023 to 2024.

Mayor Reed asked how much of the School Board budget request was dependent on the 15-50 initiatives and requested raises. Mr. Benda said that the 15-50 initiatives and salary raises constituted the largest component of the budget, totaling about \$4M. Mayor Reed asked how the \$1.2M reduction proposed by Councilmember Helgeson would impact the pay increase request. Mr. Benda responded that they would have to rely on the state appropriation to fund the pay increases. Mr. Patrick responded that the School Board would likely first determine how to fund the local match for the state salary increase, and the rest of the 15-50 initiatives would be put aside. He said that the School Board would likely have to find reductions in its operating budget to fund the local match for the 5% salary increases.

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Councilmember Misjuns disclosed that his wife was a teacher in LCS and he had a personal interest in LCS, but he was able to participate in the discussion in a manner that was fair, objective, and in the public interest. He said that in terms of the schools, funding should be focused on instruction and transportation. He noted that the City Manager's proposed budget did not fully fund the School Board's 15-50 request. Mr. Benda clarified that the City Manager's budget proposal was about \$4M less than the School Board's request. Councilmember Misjuns stated that they should commit to fully funding the transportation request increase of \$465K because there had been several challenges with transportation. He said that they should use the additional funds from the state to fully fund the transportation request and allocate the remainder to instruction expenditures. He said that they should reduce the administrative budget to fully fund 15-50 initiatives for instructional staff. Councilmember Helgeson said that raises should be dedicated to experienced staff and teachers, not newly hired employees, and they should focus on the retention of quality staff.

Mayor Reed said that competitive wages were a valid concern for the school system, and she noted that people were no longer majoring in education, so localities were forced to lower education requirements. She said that teachers were managing behavioral issues in the classroom, and students were acting out for new and different reasons, so teachers now required support at every grade level. She said that teachers were walking out every day across the country due to low pay and high burnout, and they had to consider what was happening in the classroom.

Councilmember Wilder said he did not support reductions to the school system and that the City should have the highest teacher salaries in the region. He said that he supported public safety and the increased investment, and he noted that there were other areas of the City that needed investment. He said he did not support closing the Templeton Center or the collections teller window, and he wanted to continue to grow and invest in the City.

Mayor Reed said she was concerned about the budget cut of the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) allocation because of the positive impacts of the LRBA. She said that business development was crucial to lowering taxes in the City. She said that the proposed reductions included jobs and services that the Council would have to address, and the proposed reductions were to positions and services that ultimately benefited the City.

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Councilmember Dolan said she did not support the proposed budget cuts or the discussed reductions to the school system. She said that she did not support the \$0.89 rate.

Councilmember Helgeson said that there should be more disciplinary processes available for teachers. He said that they needed to right-size the school system because of declining enrollment and noted the City had some of the highest staffing ratios in the state.

Councilmember Misjuns said that they should focus on paying and retaining veteran teachers, not on increasing starting salaries.

Councilmember Taylor said that parents did not support the teachers, and if parents were not disciplining the children, then the school system would have to intervene.

Mayor Reed asked where the Clerk of Council budget was included in the budget since there was no line item for the Clerk in the reduced or eliminated program expenditures report. Ms. Witt said that the new initiatives were included in the \$1.05 budget, but not the \$0.89 budget. She said that the Clerk's budget included Ms. Finney's salary, Council's salaries, and office supplies. She noted that the Clerk's Office had requested a part-time Deputy Clerk of Council, which had been removed, and the on-going transcription service dues and membership of \$12K was removed. Mayor Reed asked what the total funding gap was for the Clerk. Mr. Patrick said that they would provide more information in a later response.

Councilmember Misjuns said that he was concerned about funding for the US Conference of Mayors because of relationships with anti-2nd Amendment groups. He said that the City may not be able to fund the organization because it passed the 2nd Amendment Sanctuary City resolution. Ms. Finney said that she included the item because there were three new council members, and the program was a good resource for grants and materials, but it had been removed from the budget.

Ms. Witt continued her presentation regarding budget considerations for a \$0.99 tax rate.

Councilmember Wilder said he supported the \$1.05 tax rate, but the \$0.99 rate was a good compromise to add services back to the budget.

Mr. Benda said that they were considering an additional budget reconciliation meeting on the following Tuesday before the May 9 meeting. He said that if there were questions about the CIP,

categorical funding, or other topics, he could provide responses via email or at another meeting. He suggested holding the additional meeting on Tuesday.

Councilmember Misjuns asked whether Pay-Go funding was a one-time funds transfer or a transfer from the operating fund. Ms. Witt responded that it was one-time funding. Councilmember Misjuns asked for more information about how project costs were estimated.

Mr. Benda said that next Tuesday was likely the last chance the Council would have to review budget options, so staff would return with answers and information related to any of the Council's questions.

// In the matter of Roll Call, Councilmember Wilder announced that Mr. Aubrey Barbour Sr., the "Mayor of Tinbridge Hill," and Mr. Rufus Knight Jr., a coach at Heritage High School, had recently passed away; he stated that they met with the Attorney General at the University of Lynchburg regarding Operation Ceasefire. Councilmember Dolan thanked the citizens who had participated in the budget process. Councilmember Helgeson said that it was important to address the crime rates and gun violence in the City. Councilmember Taylor congratulated LPD for removing 0.5 lbs. of fentanyl from the street. Councilmember Misjuns thanked the orchestra faculty of LCS for hosting the 51st Annual Suzuki Festival. Mayor Reed stated that she toured the Miriam's House; she recognized the work and contributions of the Department of Communications and Public Engagement; she announced that April 30 – May 6 was National Small Business Week

// On the motion of Councilmember Misjuns, seconded by Councilmember Helgeson, by the following recorded vote, Council elected to hold a closed session to discuss appointments for vacancies to the following Boards and Commissions: Lynchburg Regional Airport Commission, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A.)(1) of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended.

With no further discussion from Council, the following vote was recorded:

Ayes: Stephanie Reed, Larry Taylor, Sterling Wilder, Jeff Helgeson, Marty Misjuns,

MaryJane Dolan 6

Noes: 0

Absent: Chris Faraldi 1

// The meeting was reopened to the public.

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// 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 Misjuns, and Council, by the following recorded vote, adopted the motion:

Ayes:	Stephanie Reed, Sterling Wilder, Jeff Helgeson, Marty Misjuns, Larry Taylor, MaryJane Dolan	6
Noes:		0
Absent:	Chris Faraldi	1

// // In the matter of Boards and Commissions, there were no appointments made to the Lynchburg Regional Airport Commission at this time.

// The meeting was recessed at 6:12 p.m.

// City Council reconvened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. in City Hall, Council Chamber. The following members were present:

Present:	Stephanie Reed, Sterling Wilder, Jeff Helgeson, Marty Misjuns, Larry Taylor, MaryJane Dolan	6
Absent:	Chris Faraldi	1

Councilmember Helgeson led the Council in the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

// In the matter of the Agenda, Councilmember Misjuns requested consensus to amend the agenda to include Peter Cefaratti and Dr. Brenda Farmer, representative of the NAACP at the end of public comment. Mayor Reed noted that there was consensus from Council to amend the agenda.

// In the matter of Recognitions, Agenda Item #1, Key to the City - Delegate Kathy Byron, 22nd Legislative District, Virginia General Assembly, Mayor Reed presented the Key to the City to Delegate Bryon. Del. Bryon accepted the Key to the City .

// In the matter of Community Development, Agenda Item #2, a public hearing was held and Council considered adopting Resolution #R-23-035 approving the allocation of FY2024/PY 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Program funds. Grants Manager Ms. Melva Walker provided the presentation to the Council. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds the CDBG and HOME Programs. The City has available the following funds to use for eligible CDBG and HOME activities during FY 2024 (PY 2023).

CDBG AVAILABLE FUNDING/SOURCE	AMOUNT
HUD Entitlement Allocation	\$708,843.00
Reprogrammed Funds	2,310.00
Total CDBG Funding Available	\$711,153.90
HOME AVAILABLE FUNDING	AMOUNT
HUD Entitlement Allocation	\$378,083.00
Reprogrammed Funds	92,796.88
Total HOME Funding Available	\$470,879.88

The public was notified of the public hearing through a public notice advertisement published in The News and Advance on April 8 and through various sources of social media. The Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) met on March 30 and reviewed the applications that were submitted. Attachment B provides the list of projects that have been recommended for funding by the CDAC. All CDBG and HOME funds will be expended in accordance with the primary objectives of these programs. The City estimates that over 70 percent of the CDBG FY 2024 funding will benefit low/moderate income persons who comply with HUD regulations. All applications submitted for funding consideration are available for review in the Grants Administration Office, Second Floor, City Hall. At the conclusion of the

public hearing, the City Council will review the recommendations of the CDAC and approve the funding allocations to be included in the FY 2024 CDBG Fund and HOME Fund Budgets and PY 2023 CDBG and HOME Program Annual Action Plan. The Annual Action Plan will subsequently be submitted to HUD for approval.

There was no one to speak in favor or opposition either by phone, email, or in person, so the public hearing was closed and the matter rested with the Council.

Councilmember Wilder made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Taylor, to approve the resolution. Councilmember Wilder said that the CDBG funds were crucial for helping people out of poverty and providing wraparound services.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded:

Ayes: Stephanie Reed, Jeff Helgeson, Larry Taylor, Marty Misjuns, MaryJane Dolan,

Sterling Wilder 6

Noes: 0

Absent: Chris Faraldi 1

// In the matter of Finance, Agenda Item #3, Consideration of introducing Resolution #R-23-036 approving the FY 2023 Third Quarter Adjustments, Chief Financial Officer Ms. Donna Witt provided a presentation to the Council. In March, staff began the normal review of FY 2023 operating and capital revenues and expenditures of the City's various funds to determine if adjustments were needed prior to the end of the fiscal year. Departments were requested to submit any necessary adjustments that needed to be considered. Attachment A provides proposed expenditure and revenue adjustments based on the third quarter review. The General, City/Federal/State Aid, Children's Services Act (CSA), Technology, Sewer, Airport, Fleet, City Capital Projects, Sewer Capital Projects, and Airport Capital/Grant Projects Fund are amended to reflect the FY 2023 Third Quarter Adjustments.

There was no one to speak in favor or opposition either by phone, email, or in person, so the public hearing was closed and the matter rested with the Council.

Councilmember Wilder made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Dolan, to approve the resolution.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded:

Ayes: Stephanie Reed, Jeff Helgeson, Larry Taylor, Marty Misjuns, MaryJane Dolan,	
Sterling Wilder	6
Noes:	0
Absent: Chris Faraldi	1

// In the matter of the Lynchburg Police Department, Agenda Item #63, Council considered the first reading of Resolution #R-23-037 amending the FY 2023 City/Federal/State Aid Fund budget and appropriating \$362,047 for the purchase of law enforcement equipment and technology for the Lynchburg Police Department; Mayor Reed requested by consensus to move the item before Public Comment. Chief of Police Mr. Ryan Zuidema provided a presentation to the Council. The City of Lynchburg was awarded \$362,047 in a second round of funding from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, American Rescue Plan Act, Funding Program. The Police Department will use this funding to procure & purchase: Fifty-two (52) Panasonic Toughbook laptops (\$247,052). These devices will allow increased flexibility for officers to perform required tasks both inside and away from patrol vehicles. DJI Matrice Drone (\$40,000). This drone will enhance the Police Department's emergency response capability for such events as missing persons and critical incidents. Additionally, it will allow for more efficient documentation of both crime scenes and accident reconstructions. Tactical Robot (\$56,995) - This tactical robot will allow for enhanced officer and community safety during critical incidents, high-risk warrant service, and operations involving crisis negotiations. It has the capability to maneuver in a variety of environments and stream live video and audio. Throwbot and Search Stick (\$18,000) – These tools will also allow for enhanced officer and community safety during critical incidents, high-risk warrant service, and operations involving crisis negotiations. Both devices can be easily deployed into confined spaces such as attics and basement crawl spaces, allowing tactical operators to view these areas without having to enter them.

Councilmember Helgeson made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Misjuns, to approve the resolution.

Councilmember Misjuns asked whether the funds would be appropriated for the drone response vehicles. Chief Zuidema responded that there was already a drone program that consisted of several drones. He said that the new drone would be a larger drone that would be used in the vehicle.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded:

Ayes: Stephanie Reed, Jeff Helgeson, Larry Taylor, Marty Misjuns, MaryJane Dolan,

Sterling Wilder 6

Noes: 0

Absent: Chris Faraldi 1

// In the matter of the Agenda, Clerk of Council Ms. Alicia L. Finney recognized Sameria Lamberth, Mayor's Youth Council President and senior at Heritage High School. She said Ms. Lambert would attend Virginia Tech next year.

Ms. Finney also noted several students had signed up for public comment, and since it was a school night, she suggested moving all of the students to the front of the speaker agenda. Mayor Reed noted consensus from Council and Ms. Finney called the students to the front.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #24, Citizen Isla Wasson, an 8th grader at Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School, spoke about the benefits of a pay raise for school staff. She said that LCS employees should be paid a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, and teachers should receive salary increases.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #30, Citizen Nayquan Williams, a student at Empowerment Academy and representing the Good Gang Initiative, spoke about how teens in the community were drawn to violent activities because of the lack of public activities to enable positive development.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #31, Citizen Jaiden Wernette, a student who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #49, Citizen Sadie Hageman, a student, spoke against lowering the tax rate. She said that the tax cut would impact all essential workers and teachers, public facilities and projects, custodial staff, administrative staff, and the schools.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #4, Citizen Beth White spoke about the impacts of inflation on City residents and City services. She noted that staff retention would be impacted by a lowered tax rate, and she spoke about the cybersecurity risks posed to the City by not hiring more IT staff.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #5, Citizen Robert Brennan, Lynchburg City School Board, said he supported the 2024 LCS proposed budget and the 15-50 initiatives.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #6, Citizen Rodney Hubbard expressed concerns about elderly abuse in nursing homes and spoke about personal experiences with abuse in nursing homes. He stated that Social Services had detained his father in a nursing home which led to the abuse causing his father's death. He said that the Council needed to include budget items to prevent elder abuse and support elderly people.

Councilmember Misjuns made the request to include an item on a future agenda to subpoena the records involving Social Services and Mr. Hubbard's father and begin an investigation into the matter. Mayor Reed noted there was consensus from the Council to support the request. Mr. Benda proposed including the item during the May 9 or the May 23 meeting.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #7, Citizen Jennifer Williams spoke in favor of funding the 15-50 plan for LCS. She spoke about the impacts of teacher retention and high turnover rates on the academic success of students.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #8, Citizen Kristen Prosen spoke against lowering the tax rate to \$0.89. She said that cutting the tax rate would compromise what made the City a great place to live and start a business. She said that the tax proposal significantly diminished the quality of life and wellness of City residents, did not reflect the needs of the community, and did not support business investment.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #9, Citizen Elizabeth Short, public school English teacher, spoke about the surmounting burdens, stresses, traumas, and hardships faced by today's students and teachers. She said that LCS was losing teachers at an alarming rate, and Linkhorne Middle School had lost 14 teachers that year.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #10, Citizen Sam Coleman, Chief Academic Officer of LCS, stated that to achieve the 15-50 plan, LCS needed real and tangible investments and support from the Council. He requested the Council to support the 15-50 plan and work with the schools to develop a funding formula.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #11, Citizen Andrew Napierkowski, math teacher at LCS, requested the Council to support the LCS 15-50 plan. He spoke about the struggles faced by teachers related to pay and the need to improve retention.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #12, Citizen Brooke Andrews, 5th grade teacher at LCS, said that LCS faculty deserved a pay increase. She said that expectations of teachers went beyond the classroom, and inflation warranted pay increases. She spoke about the importance of teacher retention and requested the Council to implement the 15-50 plan.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #13, Citizen Jen Staton spoke about how public-private partnerships would not be possible without support from City and LCS employees and staff. She requested the Council approve the City Manager's budget proposal.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #14, Citizen James Coleman spoke in support of City services, retaining and recruiting quality staff, and the LCS 15-50 plan.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #15, Citizen Allison Daugherty who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #16, Citizen David Lee said that he was a homeowner in the City and spoke in support of the City Manager's proposed budget.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #17, Citizen Judy Lee spoke about the need to consult the experienced members of the Council and City staff.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #18, Citizen Rachel Gagen, President of Live Healthy Lynchburg, stated that the proposed tax cuts and budget would negatively impact the health and wellbeing of the community. She said that fully funding LCS would decrease the dropout rates and improve the community. She spoke about staffing needs in LCS for nursing, faculty, support staff, transportation, and mental health. She requested the Council reconsider the tax cuts and budget.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #19, Citizen Luisa Alvarado spoke in support of the City Manager's proposed budget and tax rate of \$1.05. She expressed concerns about the vote taken by the Council to reduce the tax rate to \$0.89. She spoke about the need to fund the schools.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #20, Citizen Jan Willinger spoke about the impacts of the \$0.89 tax rate on renters. She noted there were not many opportunities for tax relief for renters, over

half of City residents. She said almost every renter would benefit from increased expenditures with a tax rate of \$1.05, and homeowners would benefit from the same improvements.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #21, Citizen Mari Normyle spoke about the benefits of strategic investments in the community. She expressed concerns that the tax rate reduction would lead to budget cuts of City services.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #22, Citizen Bert Locklin spoke about the importance of recruitment and retention of school staff and faculty for a stable learning environment. He said the LCS 15-50 plan would support staff and faculty retention through compensation, support, and leadership.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #23, Citizen Megan Huffman advocated for the Superintendent's budget plan and the 15-50 plan, and she supported the City Manager's proposed budget to address increased costs and maintain City services.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #25, Citizen Skylar Dempsey spoke in support of the \$1.05 tax rate and the City Manager's proposed budget. She said she supported the tax cuts provided in the \$1.05 rate and the 15-50 plan for LCS. She recommended a \$0.97 tax rate to reduce the burden on homeowners while still funding City services.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #26, Citizen Amanda Smithson spoke about the impacts associated with the \$0.89 tax rate and how the impacts of school divestment were visible across the country. She spoke in support of the 15-50 plan and investment in LCS.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #27, Citizen Joan Pense spoke about struggles within the LCS IEP and special education programs. She said that the administration was responsible for school outcomes, and they should be held accountable for the funding.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #28, Citizen Maggie Millard spoke against categorical funding. She said she supported allowing the School Board to manage its funds and funding the 15-50 plan. She said the Council should follow the recommendations from the experts it hired.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #29, Citizen Josh Pratt representing Action Mission who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #32, Citizen Michael Bremer spoke against categorical funding for LCS. He said the Council should provide at least the \$3M proposed in the City Manager's budget for LCS salary increases.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #33, Citizen David Ream expressed concerns about the amount of funding dedicated to the administrative salaries in LCS. He said that administrative positions should be reevaluated to better support and benefit the students and classroom, and the needs of the schools could be met with an \$0.89 rate.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #34, Citizen Lindsey Van Zile who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #35, Citizen Joudly St Fleur who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #36, Citizen Sarah Green who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #37, Citizen Karin Warren who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #38, Citizen Sarah Blankenship who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #39, Citizen Ghislaine Lewis who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #40, Citizen Andrea Hurt who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #41, Citizen Jeff Rosner spoke in opposition to categorical funding for LCS. He expressed concerns about the divisive rhetoric used by some councilmembers.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #42, Citizen Lanaux Hailey spoke about the need for transparency in regard to the budget process. She expressed concerns that comments from councilmembers lacked transparency, clarity, and specificity in relation to school funding.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #43, Citizen Christy Horsley spoke about how the prayer for Blue Sunday, a service event held by faith leaders to pray for the healing of children who experienced abuse, intersected with several budget items. She spoke about how adequate staffing was required to ensure children the foster system ended up in the care of family members. She said that Social Services had significant staff turnover that negatively impacted the outcomes of children entering into the foster system, and adequately funding schools was critical for positive outcomes.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #44, Citizen Kate Goodman, speaking on behalf of Social Services Advisory Board, spoke about the role and benefits of Social Services in the community. She said that Social Services was significantly understaffed and underfunded, and even if the department's request were fully funded, the caseload for family services specialists would exceed standards set in state code. She requested the Council to invest in Social Services so community members could have their basic needs met.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #45, Citizen Randall Turille who previously signed up to speak requested his name be removed from the agenda.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #46, Citizen Pam Wright who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #47, Citizen Scott Brabrand spoke about the need for Council to pass a budget providing tax relief and investment in City services. He said it was necessary to fund the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and spoke against categorical funding.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #48, Citizen Beth Savage spoke in opposition to the proposed tax rate reduction. She said cutting City services would be detrimental to future generations. She said that if City workers and teachers unionized, they would be able to protect themselves from the negative impacts of political decisions.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #50, Citizen Tyler Turner, speaking on behalf of Americans for Prosperity, spoke against entitlement programs, government expansion, and administrative agencies. He advocated for educational choice, the abolishment of state income and small business taxes, reduced regulations on 1099 contractors, clean energy production, and professional licensure, and reentry services for formerly incarcerated people. He supported lowering the tax rate.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #51, Citizen David Hageman said he supported higher taxes if it meant better services for the community. He spoke about the amount of effort teachers dedicated to their classrooms.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #52, Citizen Katie Snyder spoke in opposition to the \$0.89 tax rate. She expressed concerns that the proposed tax rate would slow growth in the City to a point of decline. She requested the Council to propose and consider a compromised rate reflective of the balanced approach requested by City residents.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #53, Citizen Erica Powers expressed concerns regarding the proposed lowered tax rate and categorical funding for LCS. She requested the Council to accept the School Board's funding request. She said she supported the 15-50 plan.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #54, Citizen Curt Diemer, speaking on behalf of Let's Make Lynchburg a 2A Sanctuary, spoke about how there would still be people who could not afford the \$0.89 tax rate. He encouraged the Council to consider the best interests of all Lynchburg citizens so that the decisions of the Council helped and benefited those citizens.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #55, Citizen LeAnn Johnson, speaking on behalf of Young Women's Empowerment Academy, spoke in opposition to the \$0.98 tax rate. She said that student support services required additional funding and support.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #56, Citizen Kailyn Snyder, student and Heritage High School, School Board representative, spoke about how cutting funding to LCS would impact thousands of students, the faculty, and the staff. She encouraged people to attend the performances of "The Prom" on Thursday and Friday night because the production's overall message was acceptance of all people.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #57, Citizen Emily Schuch, teacher at LCS, expressed concerns about entering into the teaching profession under the current pay scale. She said teachers were leaving the profession for better pay, and lowering teacher qualifications lowered the quality of education and instruction.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #58, Citizen Jessica Wise expressed concerns regarding the \$0.89 tax rate and the impacts on the Lynchburg Public Library.

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// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #59, Citizen Laura Henry-Stone who previously signed up to speak was not in attendance.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #60, Citizen James City expressed support for the 15-50 plan for LCS. He noted that surrounding counties were considering 7% increases in Amherst and 10% in Bedford. He said the 15-50 plan was a necessary starting point and requested the Council to seriously consider it.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #61, Citizen Chris Quigg suggested removing the Department of Equity and Community Relations in the school budget to fund teacher pay raises and directly support classroom instruction. He said that the message of equity was expensive and did not reflect true American values. He said he supported the \$0.89 tax rate.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #62, Citizen Karen Elizabeth Quigg expressed concerns about student behavior and a lack of consequences. She said that public education had eroded since the Supreme Court ruled class prayer as unconstitutional in 1962.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #63, Citizen Peter Cefaratti said that increasing taxes drove business from the City. He said that Human Services staff required support and competitive pay. He said that money was not important to a quality education. He said the School Board needed to implement policies to improve classroom behavior and address disruptions.

// In the matter of Public Comment, Agenda Item #64, Citizen Brenda Farmer, speaking on behalf of the Lynchburg NAACP, spoke in support of the City Manager's proposed budget. She said that the general fund budget analysis did not provide reasonable guidelines that met the City's needs. She said that the proposals from the Council required more clarity, and she supported a 5% pay raise for LCS, public safety, and City staff.

// The meeting adjourned at 10:31 p.m.

Clerk of Council