

April 22, 2025

// A special meeting of the Council of the City of Lynchburg was held on the 22nd day of April, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Larry Taylor, President, presiding. The following Members were present:

Present: Larry Taylor, Curt Diemer, Stephanie Reed, Chris Faraldi, Sterling A. Wilder, Martin Misjuns, Jacqueline Timmer	7
Absent:	0

// Vice Mayor Diemer led the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

// In the matter of the Budget, Agenda Item #1, Council held a public hearing regarding the Real Property Tax Rate. Mayor Taylor opened the hearing for comments from the public.

Citizen Beth White, Ward 3, addressed increasing property assessments, hers increased 50%, yet she advocated for not reducing the real estate property tax rate. She said that living in a City came with expected services, which all residents benefited from, while only a minority of residents owned property. She expressed concerns about the need to cut City services if the tax rate was reduced.

Citizen Hope McRorie, representing We the People, expressed concerns about the availability of information related to City business. She emphasized the universal need for housing and expressed the need to focus on the basics. She suggested that the private sector should provide services, rather than the City.

Citizen Peter Cefaratti, Ward 1, expressed support for an equalized tax rate. He said that the City should focus on needs rather than wants. He suggested Council find other avenues for revenue generation, and property owners were welcome to pay extra taxes on their bill.

Citizen Carl Hutcherson, Ward 2, requested that Council not lower the tax rate any more so the City can keep pace with other cities in the state. He said that some residents were willing to pay a higher tax rate to see the City move forward, otherwise, future generations may suffer.

Citizen Charles Gammon, Ward 3, representing Chestnut Hill and Fort Hill homeowners, expressed concerns about the erosion of private property rights and the proposed tax rate. He said that real estate assessments will never decrease, and the City had grown inappropriately. He requested that Council lower taxes.

Citizen Greg Berry, Ward 3, expressed concerns about the amount of taxes he had paid on his home. He said that Council should protect the rights of residents, and they should stop taking from them. He requested that Council refuse the tax increase.

Citizen Steven Jordan, Fort Hill, said that as a property owner, he did not want Council to increase taxes. He asked Council to keep the tax rate low.

Citizen Jan Willinger, Ward 1, questioned, as a homeowner, what Council proposed to help the over 50% of residents who rented in the City. She said that landlords were realizing additional profits from reduced taxes, yet renters were not experiencing a reduction in rents.

Citizen Lisa Liston, Ward 1, expressed concerns about the increases in real estate assessments, of which hers increased by 35%. She said that she could not sustain a 35% tax increase as a retired person. She suggested that Council implement different real property tax rates for long-term residents and new residents.

Citizen Jeff Helgeson explained that lowering taxes would allow assessments to increase and enable the City to grow. He requested that Council set the tax rate at the equalization rate.

Citizen Andrea Hurtt, Ward 2, expressed concerns about waste, fraud, and abuse in local government and the increasing costs of living in the City. She requested Council set a tax rate below the equalization rate.

Citizen Jill Rufus said she currently owned 23 rental units in the City, and her son mowed the lawns and her husband performed repairs to keep the costs down. She said that the proposed tax rate would result in about a \$3,500 tax increase, and they would likely pass the cost down to their renters because they did not have a buffer to otherwise afford the costs.

Citizen Kari Bohrnstedt said that she was tempted to move her family and business into the county to reduce their tax burden. She requested Council set an equalized tax rate to reduce her tax burden.

Citizen Steve Troxel, Ward 4, said that his property value increased \$80,000, and his taxes increased 31%, and with an equalized rate, his taxes would increase by 13%. He said that he was still working at 73 years old to afford to live in the City, and if he wanted to retire, he would probably have to

move. He said that the City should focus on needs, and he requested Council set a rate so his taxes did not increase at all.

Citizen Michael Kalafian addressed Council regarding the need to lower taxes, reduce the government, and cut fraud and waste. He said that they should not have to debate the tax rate every two years.

Citizen Zach Melder, Ward 1, said that collecting more taxes than necessary was legalized theft, and real estate taxes were the most wicked form of tax policy. He said that real estate taxes were regressive, aided gentrification, and discouraged investments.

Citizen Joan Menge, Ward 1, expressed concerns about the increasing cost of living, which made it difficult for her to afford the proposed tax increase. She stated her support for a \$0.76 tax rate.

Citizen Ryan Thomas, Ward 2, believed that any taxation beyond the point of consumption represented a taking by the state enforced by violence. He expressed concerns about his increasing tax burden. He requested that Council equalize the tax rate.

Citizen Salvatore Petros was not present.

Citizen Rebekah Taylor, Ward 1, said she was unable to sustain a tax increase because she operated with slim margins for her rental properties. She said she would have to raise rents on her tenants if the tax rate was increased, and she was looking to move out of the City due to increasing taxes. She asked Council to lower the tax rate.

Citizen Harold Hail did not speak.

Citizen Ms. Waller asked Council to raise taxes. She said that if they did not raise taxes, services such as ambulances and trash collection may not be able to continue, and emergency repairs, such as water main breaks, may not be fixed.

Citizen Risa Hayes, Ward 1, said she had experienced homelessness growing up, and even though she recently lost her job, her property value had doubled, and every day expenses had increased, she still supported increasing the tax rate. She said that cutting taxes would destroy families who could not afford things like groceries, and it would harm the community. She criticized self-proclaimed Christians who were choosing money over their community.

Citizen Megan Huffman, Ward 1, said that the City needed to fund the services it provided. She requested that Council adopt a budget and set a tax rate which allowed the City to thrive, and the proposed budget and tax cuts would not further this goal.

Citizen Kimberly Dyke-Harsley, Ward 2, addressed Council regarding economic impacts on consumer spending if the real estate tax rate was set too high and how this would impact other tax revenues. She said they needed to find a tax rate in the middle and find alternative revenues.

Citizen David Wickline, Ward 1, said he was unable to afford to pay the taxes on his property because he was on a fixed income. He said there had to be a better and different way to address the problems in the City.

Citizen Sarah Kalafian, Ward 1, expressed concerns about the amount of taxes they paid. She asked City staff to re-examine the budget to find cuts that would not impact the schools, libraries, pools, or other necessary services. She said that the City could solicit donations to account for a reduced tax rate.

Citizen Jen Stayton, Ward 1, asked Council to increase taxes. She said that she chose to move to Lynchburg because of the great services it offered, including emergency response times, numerous AP classes for high schoolers, and parks. She said that people had been saying for years they would move to the counties if taxes were not reduced; yet, they still lived in the City, and people continued to move to the City.

Citizen Chris Quigg, Ward 3, asked Council to do its job. He said that public safety, transportation, public utilities, and education were the duty of Council. He said that Council should equalize the tax rate and not do more than its duty, such as renovations and maintenance.

Citizen Karen Quigg, Ward 3, expressed frustration about her property taxes, and she asked Council to abolish them. She suggested increasing sales taxes. She called for a detailed audit of City finances. She said that if taxes were reduced, then citizens would have money available to perform the services the City provided for themselves.

Citizen Mario Calabretta, Ward 1, said that his family came from Calabria in Italy, which was the poorest part of Italy. He said that he would pass any tax increases to his tenants. He asked Council to reconsider the tax increases.

Citizen Dante Calabretta, Ward 2, expressed concerns about his ability to purchase property and the increasing cost of living. He requested that Council lower the tax rate.

Citizen David Ray Boven, expressed concerns about his increasing property value assessments. He said he did not mind paying taxes, but he was concerned about the over inflation of his property values.

Citizen Josh Eager, Ward 1, said he bought his home two years ago, and he wanted to see the tax rate increased to \$0.89. He said he wanted the schools and the library to be fully funded, and he wanted to see City services increased. He encouraged the City to build more houses so that prices remained low, which would enable more people to buy homes in the City.

Citizen Catherine Golden, Ward 4, requested that Council reduce the tax rate. She said that her rent increased every year, and her water rates increased as well. She said she was considering getting a roommate to afford her rent.

Citizen Reggie Williams, Ward 4, expressed concerns about the current national economic climate. He said he was not willing to make any cuts to City services, but they should be more careful in how funds were spent.

Citizen Katrina Ing, Ward 2, encouraged people to volunteer their time or make donations rather than raising taxes. She said that people should not be forced to use their money for things they did not use, and the City should spend money for the good of all residents.

Citizen David Ream, Ward 3, expressed concerns about increasing property taxes. He said he was considering moving out of the City. He expressed concerns about the increasing property value assessments. He said that Council had to do something to help him stay in the City.

Clerk of Council Alicia Finney stated there were 13 voicemails. She played the voicemails into the record.

Citizen David Turner, via voicemail, addressed Council regarding property assessments and the tax rate. He urged Council to set the rate at \$0.795 instead of \$0.89.

Citizen Pat O'Hara, via voicemail, said that keeping the tax rate where it was would enable the City to invest more in parks, schools, and the library. He said that taxes should be kept at the current rate.

Citizen James Jones, via voicemail, said he opposed the City Manager's proposed tax rate.

April 22, 2025

Citizen Dennis Toothman, via voicemail, said he was not in favor of increasing the tax rate if it would be used to build the amphitheater.

Citizen Leslie Irving, via voicemail, requested that Council set an equalized tax rate. He expressed concerns about the increased tax burden from setting the tax rate at \$0.89. He suggested Council allocate the necessary funding for public safety and for schools, taking into account decreasing enrollment. He asked the City Manager to reduce budget requests by 5% for each department.

Citizen Larry Bell, via voicemail, opposed any tax rate increases upward of 25% to 30%. He encouraged Council to conduct an audit of City finances. He said he would support a 5% tax increase.

Citizen Gwen Davis, via voicemail, said she did not see how increased property taxes would benefit the City. She expressed concerns about the impacts on her fixed income. She asked Council to reconsider the tax rate.

Citizen Jonathan Jeffery, via voicemail, noted that housing costs had skyrocketed due to private equity buying houses and keeping them vacant to artificially increase scarcity. He said housing was a human necessity, and he encouraged the City to implement a people-first housing policy and support a strong-towns model.

Citizen Joe Turk, via voicemail, said that the City Manager's proposed tax rate was too high. He encouraged Council to adopt the equalized rate.

Citizen Charlie Hesse, via voicemail, asked Council to adopt the equalized tax rate. He said that the tax increases would require him to increase rent for his tenants.

Citizen Sherry Burnette, via voicemail, asked Council to adopt the equalized rate. She said that the City Manager's proposed rate would create an economic burden for her.

Citizen Christina Allen, via voicemail, asked Council to reduce the budget. She expressed concerns about the increased tax burden.

Citizen Richard Allen, via voicemail, asked Council to lower taxes and balance the budget.

There was no one else wishing to speak, either by phone or in person, so the public hearing was closed.

Councilmember Misjuns motioned, seconded by Councilmember Timmer to set the real property tax rate to the equalization rate of \$0.767 per \$100 of assessed value for Fiscal Year 2026, effective July

1, 2025; and to direct the City Attorney to prepare and present this ordinance for Council review on May 6, 2025, with a subsequent vote on May 13, 2025; and to direct the City Manager to align the proposed FY 2026 Operating Budget and the FY 2026 – 2030 Capital Improvement Program with this rate.

Vice Mayor Diemer made a substitute motion to lower the tax rate to \$0.75 per \$100 of assessed value for Fiscal Year 2026, effective July 1, 2025; and to direct the City Attorney to prepare and present this ordinance for Council review on May 6, 2025, with a subsequent vote on May 13, 2025; and to direct the City Manager to align the proposed FY 2026 Operating Budget and the FY 2026 – 2030 Capital Improvement Program with this rate. There was no second so the substitute motion died.

The Mayor stated that the meeting was to hear from the citizens and ruled the motion out of order.

// The meeting was recessed at 8:10 p.m.

// The meeting reconvened at 8:23 p.m.

// Council continued discussion on Agenda Item #1 regarding the Real Property Tax Rate.

Councilmember Misjuns said that the City Manager would need time to adjust the budget to the equalized tax rate, and waiting until the May 13 meeting would only provide a narrow window to accomplish the task. Councilmember Misjuns made a motion to amend the agenda to discuss adopting a real estate tax rate at the end of all of the scheduled public hearings for the night. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Diemer.

Mayor Taylor made a substitute motion to continue with the scheduled public hearings and discuss the real property tax rate at the May 13th meeting. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion.

Councilmember Timmer said she believed they had plenty of time to speak with staff and with citizens, and they would need time to adjust the budget appropriately. She said that they needed to have a discussion after setting the rate to ensure priorities were met. She said Council needed to consider creative approaches to addressing the needs of the City. She said it was more than appropriate to vote on the tax rate after the public hearings.

Vice Mayor Diemer said he was opposed to delaying the vote on the tax rate. He said that staff needed time to adjust the budget to the equalized tax rate. He said he was willing to compromise by adopting the equalized rate, even though it would mean some people would still pay more in taxes.

Councilmember Misjuns said that Council heard from 49 citizens tonight and 36 of those people asked Council not to increase taxes, so his request to equalize the tax rate was representative of those citizens' request. He noted that in 2024, the cost to replace the downtown parking deck was over \$51 million in the CIP; however, after considering the cost to restore the parking deck, the cost was brought down to only \$600,000 for restoration. He said that Council should consider other restoration efforts to reduce budget costs. He said that staff would need time to adjust the budget to accommodate the equalized rate, and he opposed the substitute motion. He requested that the Mayor withdraw his motion.

Councilmember Wilder said he supported the Mayor's motion. He said staff would need to elaborate on what the consequences would be of lowering the tax rate for the public.

Mayor Taylor asked City Manager Wynter Benda whether postponing the rate decision would allow sufficient time to make necessary budget adjustments.

Mr. Benda stated that while he couldn't give a definitive answer, he and City staff are committed to supporting whatever decision Council makes on the budget.

Vice Mayor Diemer stated that more time would help the City Manager adjust to a likely lower tax rate and emphasized a disconnect between the proposed rate and public concerns, especially from those on fixed incomes and small business owners.

Mr. Benda emphasized that his budget proposal was based on professional experience, input from Councilmembers, and the City's long-term needs. He acknowledged concerns about a disconnect but reiterated his commitment to staying connected with Council and addressing priorities such as public safety, infrastructure, and support for residents on fixed incomes. He stated he is prepared to help implement whatever direction Council chooses.

Vice Mayor expressed confidence in the City Manager's ability to adjust the budget to a lower rate while preserving key priorities like public safety and education.

Councilmember Reed said that two years ago, Council lowered taxes significantly. She said she appreciated the 49 people who provided public comments; however, there were 79,950 other people in the City who did not, and she had to represent those people as well. She said she supported the Mayor's motion because it provided Council time to discuss the tax rate and listen to public comment before making decisions.

Councilmember Wilder thanked the City Manager for budget efforts and questioned why school funding hasn't increased like the fire departments'.

Councilmember Timmer clarified a point from the City Manager's remarks, noting that the \$17 million referenced was not a cut from the previous budget but rather a reduction from the proposed budget.

Mr. Benda confirmed the \$17 million was tied to the penny amount, not a budget cut, and noted that new investments, especially in public safety, increased overall spending.

Councilmember Timmer stressed that homeownership and affordability are crucial issues, not political ones. She called for protecting homeowners, creatively funding community projects, and equalizing the tax rate to ensure stability.

Councilmember Faraldi called the question on the substitute motion.

Councilmember Misjuns stated he supported reallocating funds from administration for the schools and opposed the substitute motion, urging immediate action.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded on the substitute motion to proceed with the agenda and return at a later date to discuss the tax rate.

Ayes: Taylor, Reed, Wilder 3

Noes: Diemer, Faraldi, Misjuns, Timmer 4

Councilmember Faraldi called the question on the primary motion.

Councilmember Misjuns clarified that the primary motion was to amend the agenda to discuss setting the tax rate after the public hearings.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded on the primary motion to amend the agenda to discuss setting the tax rate after the public hearings.

Ayes: Diemer, Misjuns, Timmer 3

Noes: Taylor, Reed, Faraldi, Wilder 4

// In the matter of the Budget, Agenda Item #2, Council held a public hearing regarding the Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Rates. Mayor Taylor opened the hearing for comments from the public.

Citizen Katrina Ing, Ward 2, expressed concerns about the water rates and suggested that people should review their water bills to ensure they were accurate. She encouraged individuals to conserve their water usage.

Citizen Andrea Hurt, Ward 2, noted that the majority of her water bill was fees, not usage. She expressed concerns about fluoride in the water and suggested the City remove it to reduce costs. She noted that Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. was looking to remove fluoride from water systems.

Citizen Rebecca Taylor was not present.

Citizen Risa Hayes, Ward 1, said that as an autistic person, Council should not be taking medical advice from Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., someone who wanted to create a national registry of autistic people and establish labor farms.

Citizen Josh Eager, Ward 1, said that his water bill was lower in the City than when he lived in Blacksburg. He said that the City's water rate was extremely low, and it provided quality services for the rate level. He said he supported fluoride in the water because it supported dental health.

Citizen Peter Cefaratti, Ward 1, suggested that the City provide each residence a free allotment of water, and any usage above that was charged at a higher rate. He said that this could reduce anxieties about water usage.

There was no one else wishing to speak, either by phone or in person, so the public hearing was closed.

// In the matter of the Budget, Agenda Item #3, Council held a public hearing regarding the FY 2026 Budget, Operating and Capital. Mayor Taylor opened the hearing for comments from the public.

Citizen Beth White, representing the MLK LCC, addressed Council in support of library renovations. She said that it would be a strategic economic investment that would yield long-term benefits for the community.

Citizen David Levy, representing the Woodland Neighborhood, addressed Council regarding support for the CIP funding for streetscape and sidewalk improvements on Bedford Avenue. He noted the significant improvements done to the corridor over the decades and the need to continue the trend.

Citizen Ben Copeland, representing Lynchburg City Schools, said that the City Manager's proposed allocation to LCS was a step in the right direction, bringing funding to the highest level in five

years. He noted how the funding would help LCS improve services and remain competitive. He expressed concerns about how a lower tax rate historically led to a reduction in school funding.

Citizen Jim Quattlebaum expressed concerns about the timing of the budget process. He suggested that Council pause the process and reexamine how much they were spending on each item.

Citizen Peter Cefaratti, representing Lynchburg City Elders, expressed concerns about budget items that represented wants, not needs. He was concerned about changes in the scope of projects that he felt were being snuck under the radar, and the public should be fully informed of what projects would include. He said they needed to think futuristically, like how artificial intelligence will impact education in three to five years.

Citizen Michael Bremer was not present.

Citizen Maegan Fallen, representing Friends of the Library, addressed Council in support of the library renovations in the CIP. She noted the importance of modernizing the library building to reduce future maintenance costs. She cited that every \$1 invested in public libraries yielded \$4 to \$5 in economic returns.

Citizen Erik Nygaard, representing the LCS Education Foundation, addressed Council in support of the LCS CIP proposal, Miller Park Pool renovations, and library improvements. He spoke about how the schools, pool, and library created an ecosystem of services that benefitted the community.

Citizen Teresa Brennan was not present.

Citizen JoAnn Martin, representing the NAACP, addressed Council regarding concerns about the impact of budget cuts on Black and Brown community members in the City, people who were disproportionately affected. She spoke in support of the public pool and library renovations. She expressed concerns about the long-term impacts and costs of reducing the budget.

Citizen Molly McClennan, Ward 1, asked Council to adopt the budget as presented, and she supported the necessary tax increases. She said she wanted Lynchburg to continue being a place that looked to the future.

Citizen Paul Kee, Ward 1, asked Council to invest in the City's youth. He said that compromising the education budget would harm students' outcomes and limit societal progress.

Citizen Greg Berry was not present.

Citizen Desmond Mosby, Ward 2, addressed Council in support of prioritizing LCS in the City Manager's proposed budget. He said that a strong public school system was critical for the City's long-term success. He encouraged Council to continue the momentum of funding LCS.

Citizen Andrea Hurt, Ward 2, suggested that the City form a group similar to the federal DOGE to find waste, fraud, and abuse in local government. She called for the City to conduct a detailed audit of government finances. She said that she had not reviewed the whole budget, but she believed they could find creative solutions. She said that City staff should not all receive raises; instead, the raises should be based on merit.

Citizen Karl Loos, representing the Lynchburg Education Association, said that wealthy landowners and landlords benefitted the most from tax cuts, not the average family who would lose services. He asked Council to fully fund the LCS budget request, and the City was most prosperous when Council fully funded LCS.

Citizen Johanna Derrenbacker, Ward 1, expressed concerns about the conditions of LCS buildings. She spoke in support of the proposed CIP funding for school facility improvements.

Citizen Beverly McCloskey, representing Embrace Our Schools, expressed concerns about how equalizing the tax rate would negatively impact the school system. She said that without quality schools, the City's future growth would be harmed. She requested that Council fully fund LCS.

Citizen Colleen Larkins, representing Save Our Schools, expressed concerns about the impacts of continued cuts to education funding. She noted that year after year, promised funding and improvements were never delivered. She said that teachers deserved the funding, facilities, and raises.

Citizen Aaron Reid was not present.

Citizen Risa Hayes, Ward 1, spoke about the importance of public schools, having grown up in an area that did not have public schools. She addressed the importance of libraries in expanding imaginations and improving literacy. She asked how they could find creative solutions to the City's funding needs without creative people.

Citizen Josh Eager, Ward 1, spoke in support of the proposed budget at the \$0.89 tax rate. He noted the costs of deferred maintenance, and he asked Council to fund the library and school maintenance requests to prevent future cost increases. He said that if Council wanted his continued tax

contributions, it needed to fund school and library improvements; otherwise, he, and people like him, would leave the City.

Citizen Zach Melder, Ward 1, expressed concerns about the budget schedule, where the budget and tax rate appeared to be set on the same day, May 13. He said that Council should address this apparent conflict.

Citizen Cindy Capps requested that Council approve the proposed CIP funding for LCS and maintain the current project schedule. She asked Council to approve the full \$5.5 million budget increase from LCS and prioritize school infrastructure.

Citizen Emily Kelly addressed Council regarding teacher salaries, which on average, only increased about 1.5% each year. She said that this increase did not keep up with inflation, which over the past few years had exceeded 1.5%. She said that surrounding jurisdictions offered higher salaries and step increases, which made it more difficult for the City to attract and retain talent.

Citizen Selina Morgan, representing the Young Women's Empowerment Academy, asked Council not to remove funding for LCS, pay raises for City employees, library renovation, and pool renovation. She emphasized the importance of meeting community needs. She said that 49% of the City's population received public assistance, relying heavily on the services provided by the City, and she supported increased taxes to support those services.

Citizen Kathleen Davis, Ward 2, said that public services and facilities were investments in the community, and caring about the community was not a partisan issue. She expressed concerns about privatizing public services and facilities, which would eliminate access for members of the community. She asked Council to invest in families.

Citizen Jordan Nesbitt, Ward 4, expressed concerns about the conduct of Council earlier in the meeting and how the public felt unheard. She supported the City Manager's proposed budget.

Citizen Veronica Bratton, Ward 4, addressed Council regarding its support of children in the City. She said that they needed to ensure parents had enough money to pay for food and childcare by making sure taxes were not too high.

Citizen Jan Willinger, Ward 1, requested Council to approve the City Manager's proposed budget.

Citizen Hope McRorie noted that the school building conditions deteriorated over a long period of time under previous councils. She expressed concerns about the status of education in the City. She said that they needed to help parents to support their children, particularly fathers.

Clerk of Council Alicia Finney stated there were 10 voicemails. She played the voicemails into the record.

Citizen Connor Kenaston, via voicemail, requested that Council fully fund LCS, the public library, and the proposed cost of living adjustments for City employees. He said that cheap solutions would result in higher costs in the future. He said that he wanted good government, quality schools, and modern libraries, not cheap ones. He supported a fair tax rate to make the City a vibrant and thriving place for the future.

Citizen Julie Hemstreet, via voicemail, expressed support for library funding in the CIP.

Citizen Sue Stengel, via voicemail, opposed reduced taxes and asked the City to find ways to support low-income residents. She suggested rent control and subsidy programs to provide assistance. She expressed support for library and pool renovation funding.

Citizen Ellen Nygaard, via voicemail, expressed support for the City Manager's proposed CIP. She requested that Council fully fund LCS, library renovations, and pool renovations. She asked Council not to lower the tax rate.

Citizen Patrick Earl, via voicemail, addressed Council regarding the history of public pool closures in the City. He said that in 1961, the public pools were closed and filled with dirt and trash in defiance of federal court orders to integrate the pools. He said that the Lynchburg Democratic Committee made a social media post referencing this history, under which Vice Mayor Diemer commented laughing emojis and blamed the closures on an African-American wade-in demonstration. He said that Vice Mayor Diemer's comments were racist and dismissive, and he asked Council to support funding for the library and the pool.

Citizen Emily Muenez, via voicemail, expressed support for the public library renovations.

Citizen Dr. Karin Warren, via voicemail, addressed Council in support of funding for the public library.

April 22, 2025

Citizen Anne Wilson, via voicemail, expressed support for the City Manager's proposed budget and CIP. She said she specifically supported funding for the schools, library modernization and renovations, and pool renovations.

Citizen Trudy McDaniel, via voicemail, requested that Council cease reducing taxes at the expense of public schools and the library. She encouraged Council to adopt full funding for library renovations and the Superintendent's budget request. She expressed concerns about some councilmembers' negative views towards minority groups in the City, particularly members of the LGBTQ community.

Citizen John Fees, via voicemail, addressed Council in support of the City Manager's proposed budget, particularly the infrastructure projects for Bedford Avenue.

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

Councilmember Misjuns suggested that Council reschedule the first reading of the budget on May 13 so that Council could set a tax rate before the budget presentation. He asked to amend the budget calendar to move the first reading of the budget to June 10 and the second reading to June 24. He expressed concerns about holding the budget public hearing prior to setting a tax rate.

Councilmember Faraldi said no councilmember had submitted questions in writing to staff regarding the impacts of setting an equalized tax rate on the budget. He said that all of the questions councilmembers had asked were publicly available as part of the record. He expressed disappointment in Councilmember Misjuns for taking up so much time during the meeting because the meeting was intended to hear from the public.

Councilmember Faraldi motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Benda acknowledged concerns about moving too quickly and emphasized the intent is not to rush the process. He committed to supporting Council and ensuring the upcoming work session is thorough.

// The meeting adjourned at 11:32 p.m.

Clerk of Council