

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON CITY COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2022. Scheduled for 7:00 pm. In the City Council Chambers City Hall, Mount Vernon, New York.

*** Due to the ongoing pandemic this meeting was held in the council chambers, with virtual participation via ZOOM and CMVNY Facebook. The meeting was not closed to the public however, the maximum number of in-person occupant was limited ***

PRESENT: Lisa A. Copeland, Danielle Browne Esq., Cathlin Gleason, Edward Poteat

ABSENT: None

PRESIDING: Derrick Thompson, President

OTHERS: Tanesia M. Walters, Deputy City Clerk, Elias Gootzeit, Legislative Assistant and Brian G. Johnson, Corporation Counsel

Council President Derrick Thompson called the meeting to order and provided house-keeping rules, including in case of emergency. He then asked councilman Poteat to lead the council in the Pledge of Allegiance. Council President then proceeded to the Public Speakers session of the evening (listed below as public comment).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cynthia Crenshaw - residing at 315 Mundy Lane, Mount Vernon, NY, appeared in person. She stated that the single-family home chart that was distributed that shows the yearly property tax, which also shows sewer rents, garbage charges, reflects a difference of \$3M plus, she asked that the council please explain the difference. She also stated that the average social security check \$1437, coming out of a pandemic and right into inflation is ridiculous that the residents are being charge these fees. She asked about the disclosure of the fulltime salary of the council members. She is extremely concerned of the various charges and the community coming out of the pandemic and into an inflation. She urged the citizen to take Mount Vernon back.

Debra Hunt – residing at 33 North 3rd Avenue, Mount Vernon, NY – appeared in person. She is concerned about homeless people loitering in the community as it is dangerous, and some have committed homicide. She hopes all elected officials can work together to reduce the homeless population and to get help to those who needs it.

Chris McDonough – residing at 17 Vernon Place, Mount Vernon, NY – appeared in person. He informed the council body that he had 7 questions; 1. What is the mean, median, mode and range

of salaries for the city employees, break it down by department? (1b) what are the salaries of employees in comparable neighboring cities when the low range justification for salaries increase are invoked? (2) What percentage of salary increases in the 2022 budget are discretionary and what's the total dollar amount of said increases (3) Instead of hiring more people what initiatives have been undertaken to improve training so that the good people who works for the City can become more productive and happier, when people are productive they are happy. (4) What is the estimate of the actual annual cost of the water fee will be per customer annually (5) Sewer rents- What precisely is the plan for that? (6) Exactly what the ARPA has been spent on? (7) How will this \$5M hole be filled when we don't have the ARPA money to do that/How much of the ARPA fund will we need to put in the budget if all discretionary cost was removed.

Lauren Carter *-appeared via zoom.* She said that she just wanted to raise her objection once more to the budget as it is proposed. She hopes her comments as well as the comments from all stakeholders have been taken into consideration. As per salary she is aware that the council cannot reduce or even increase them because that's done during the BOE process, but there are couple of things that the council can take action on in that regard. She concluded by posing a question of where are the benefits for the tax increase?

Raymond Copeland *residing at -appeared in person. Commissioner Copeland thanked the council for allowing him to speak.* He asked that the council take a trip through Mount Vernon to observe the things the residents comes to speak on. He spoke about is his health and how the car wash near his house affects his health and wellbeing. The loud noise from the car wash affects his peace, the loud music is blasted all day long from their speakers. He has called the police department several times and issued violations, but the car still does not heed to the violations. He has to yell to speak to his family in his house. He has no peace from the constant noise.

Council President Comment - Council President Thompson informed the public that because the meeting started late, he will afford the public an opportunity to speak even if they did not sign up to speak. He asked repeatedly if anyone would like to speak but receive no response, therefore the meeting proceed as standard.

Mary Harris residing at 222 West 2nd Street, Mount Vernon, NY. Ms. Harris said that she lived in an aged community of homeowners, she stressed that they are having a hard time just surviving, they pay their taxes and have contributed to help the city grow and thrive. The new fees are too high. She lamented that they are struggling terribly just to survive. She said that she feels as if she is being forced out of Mount Vernon. She and her family have no where to go, she bought her house to stay here.

Brian Johnson – *Corporation Counsel for the City of Mount Vernon* - appeared in person. He spoke about the budget and the law department. He stressed that if he is not able to defend the City then the tax will increase more than they are now, if said that the lawyers in the law department are very good lawyers but they are not spatialized and so he must employ outside counsel which cost money but is needed to address the myriads of lawsuits plaguing the city from prior administrations.

The council body responded to the speakers' concerns

REFERRAL SESSION

Roll Call administered by Deputy City Clerk Tanesia M. Walters

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES AND ACTION THEREON

To the Council:

The **LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC WORKS** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

- Item No. 1 An ordinance establishing the first Monday in March as Covid-19 Memorial Day in the City of Mount Vernon.
- Item No. 2 An amendment to the City of Mount Vernon Administrative Code Part II, General Legislation entitled "Chapter 126. Fees and Deposits" by adding another article, entitled "Article VI. Sewer and Refuse Sustainability Fees."
- Item No. 3 An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with New York State Unified Court System.
- Item No. 4 An ordinance amending Resolution No. 8, adopted November 23, 2021, entitled "AN ORDINANCE REQUESTING PERMISSION TO DEFUND THE POSITION OF "SENIOR CLERK" AND CREATE/FUND THE POSITION OF "SENIOR ACCOUNTANT" WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK
- Item No. 5 An ordinance authorizing a transfer of funds within the Department of Management Services.
- Item No. 6 An ordinance authorizing changes to the Law Department's positions consistent with the 2022 Reorganization.

Item No. 7 An ordinance authorizing five (5) City Council members, the City Clerk and the Deputy City Clerk to attend the 2022 New York Conference of Mayors Winter Legislative Meeting and reimbursement for same. - HELD

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Browne, Esq., Chair

Cathlin Gleason, Co-Chair

Received, passed and filed.

Passed by the following vote:

Ayes: President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat, Copeland

Nays: None

Absent: None

- **Note**...***Item No.2-received a vote of 4 Ayes and 1 Nay*
- *Item No. 7 - Held*

To the Council:

The **FINANCE AND PLANNING** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

Item No. 4 A Local Law to override the tax levy limit established in General Municipal Law Section 3-C.

Item No. 5 A resolution of the City of Mount Vernon City Council declaring its intent to serve as lead agency pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA”) notice for purposes of reviewing the zoning petition and development application.

Item. No. 6 An ordinance authorizing and directing the Comptroller to Refund an overpayment of 2021 taxes to “Pro National Title Agency”

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Poteat, Chair

Lisa Copeland, Co-Chair

Received, passed and filed.

Passed by the following vote:

Ayes: President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat, Copeland

Nays: None

Absent: None

To the Council:

The **HUMAN RESOURCES Committee** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

Item No. 8 An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services. (\$28,431.00)

Item No. 9 An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Service Agreement with the Westchester County Youth Bureau and the Board of Legislators. (\$163,976.00 – Safe Haven, Youth Empowerment and Step-Up programs)

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Copeland, Chair

Edward Poteat, Co-Chair

Received, passed and filed.

Passed by the following vote:

Ayes: President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat, Copeland

Nays: None

Absent: None

To the Council:

The **PUBLIC SAFETY AND CODES** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

Item No. 10 An ordinance declaring an emergency situation at 35 South 8th Avenue.

Item No. 11 An ordinance authorizing the Police Department to dispose of vehicles assigned to the Mount Vernon Police Department Motor Pool and accept funds for the disposal thereof.

Item No. 12 An ordinance requesting authorization to adjust the salary grade for the title of “Plan Examiner” within the Department of Buildings.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathlin Gleason, Chair

Danielle Browne, Esq., Co-Chair

Received, passed and filed.

Passed by the following vote:

Ayes: President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat, Copeland

Nays: None

Absent: None

OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Session – To discuss personnel matters – Discussing the resignation letter received from Mr. William Holmes (city clerk) and how they will proceed thereafter. The council body thank Mr. Holmes for his service and wished him luck on his future endeavors. The council then entered into a vote to receive his resignation letter and end his service with the clerk’s office effective immediately.

Vote: 3 Ayes: *Browne, Gleason, Thompson*

2 Nays: *Copeland and Poteat*

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

Tanesia M. Walters, *J.D., M.P.A*

Deputy City Clerk