

**CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL**  
**WORK SESSION**  
**June 21, 2021**  
**Virtual/electronic meeting via Zoom**

**4:00 PM WORK SESSION**

Pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3712, the Charlottesville City Council met in work session on Monday, June 21, 2021, to hear reports. The meeting was held electronically pursuant to a local ordinance amended and re-enacted on April 19, 2021, to ensure continuity of government and prevent the spread of disease during the coronavirus State of Emergency.

Mayor Walker called to order at 4:00 p.m. and Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas called the roll, noting the following members present: Mayor Nikuyah Walker, Vice Mayor Sena Magill, and Councilors Heather Hill, Michael Payne, and Lloyd Snook.

**REPORTS**

**1. City Monthly Financial Report**

Ryan Davidson, Senior Budget and Management Analyst, presented the monthly financial report for the City of Charlottesville for period ending May 31, 2021, showing an improved outlook on expected deficit projections since the previous report. A few of the more notable changes were increased revenues from the following taxes: Real Estate; Business, Professions & Occupational; Sales; Meals; and Lodging.

Mayor Walker asked that future reports include more information about expenditures. City Manager Boyles shared potential ways to handle American Rescue Plan funds for revenue recovery and support of local agencies.

**2. Recovery Roadmap Update - Economic Development**

Chris Engel, Director of Economic Development, provided a presentation on the Recovery Roadmap: A Plan for Business Recovery in Charlottesville to help helping businesses recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. He advised that the plan was created with the help of public engagement. The four major areas addressed by the Plan were determined to be:

1. Financial Assistance

1.1 Execute two rounds of the Building Resilience Among Charlottesville Entrepreneurs (BRACE) grant, focused on business model pivots and resilience capacity, to assist existing City businesses with full recovery.

1.2 Provide technical assistance grants for services critical to business recovery (e.g., marketing/advertising, marketing collateral, social media, photography, videography, websites, strategic planning, etc.)

1.3 Execute two rounds of the GO Start-Up program to help new businesses successfully launch in the next 12 months.

1.4 Execute the Advancing Charlottesville Entrepreneurs (ACE) grant to encourage growth of small businesses in Charlottesville.

## 2. Training & Resource Access

2.1 Execute a targeted GO HIRE initiative that helps City employers reach pre-COVID-19 employment levels.

2.2 Offer a free Business Training Series with recovery topics on a quarterly basis.

2.3 Connect employers to qualified job candidates through services at the Downtown Job Center. (Example services: employer spotlights, bi-weekly communication to job seekers, targeted recruitment events, among others.)

2.4 Explore creating a specific hospitality-focused training program that prepares and connects employees with job opportunities in this sector.

2.5 Enhance communication and stakeholder management techniques for business outreach regarding training opportunities and resources available to them through means such as bi-monthly newsletter, quarterly meetings on relevant topics, and online forums.

## 3. Infrastructure Needs

3.1 Explore the creation of Designated Outdoor Refreshments Areas (DORAs) in concert with internal and external stakeholders as a tool to help revive business areas.

3.2 Advocate for a dedicated team of city resources to conduct a biannual “Clean Up Day” for the public right of way along key business corridors. The Office of Economic Development would work with Public Service and Parks & Recreation Departments to identify and create short term work plans to enhance the beautification and cleanliness of the City’s main corridor.

3.3 Update and refresh the commercial corridor maps to make it easier to find locations and provide customers with QR codes to provide additional assistance.

#### 4. Marketing and Advertising.

4.1 Create a marketing leverage grant program to extend the reach of already-planned marketing dollars and assist with messaging on reopening.

4.2 Create a Co-op program that allows access to reduced-cost advertising and production assistance.

4.3 Execute a Buy Local campaign to encourage understanding and awareness of supporting local businesses.

Regarding infrastructure, Jason Ness, Business Development Manager, provided additional information about legislation that would go into effect on July 1, 2021, to extend rights for Outdoor Refreshment Areas. Mr. Engel advised that both the City and County would be requesting equal funds to support the Charlottesville-Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB) and that all options would be scalable at Council's discretion.

Councilor Hill asked about staffing capacity and Mr. Engel advised that the 12 to 18-month Plan was program-driven and not staffing-dependent.

Mayor Walker brought up a concern voiced by citizens regarding the Outdoor Recreation Area rules on the Downtown Mall and equitable treatment of citizens as alcohol rules change.

Councilor Snook asked for an update on festivals and City Manager Boyles advised that applications were being accepted for events that would occur after the beginning of September, given the approval timeline.

Mayor Walker asked for more information about grant writing, about the CACVB budget, and about how the decision was weighed for supporting the CACVB versus direct aid to small businesses. Mr. Engel provided an explanation of Economic Development processes to help businesses, partnering with Small Business Development. He also explained the potential impact of the funding.

Councilor Payne commented about General Assembly plans to distribute a portion of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to tourism and possibly tourism boards. He asked if

State funds could cover the requested funds from the CACVB and about the measurable return on investment for the tourism board. He advised that he would be open to the DORA but still had questions about equity in enforcement. Mr. Engel advised that he was not familiar with the ARP funds for tourism but would look into it. He advised that a local study is conducted annually to provide data regarding local return on investment for tourism.

Councilor Snook voiced a concern about the need to get bathrooms on the Downtown Mall. Mr. Engel agreed that the community working together would need to find a solution.

Councilors gave feedback that they would be willing to consider a DORA Ordinance with more information about how it would work, working with Social Services and The Haven. Vice Mayor Magill added that the DORA should be considered for other city areas in addition to the Downtown Mall.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Walker opened the floor for public comment.

- Brandon Collins, city resident employed with the Public Housing Association of Residents, asked a question about job and employment training. He encouraged GO programming in the construction trades.

On motion by Councilor Hill, seconded by Councilor Snook, Council voted 5-0 (Ayes: Hill, Magill, Payne, Snook, Walker; Noes: none) to convene in closed session as authorized by Virginia Code Sections 2.2-3711 and 2.2- 3712, specifically:

- Section 2.2-3711(A)(1), for discussion and consideration of prospective candidates for appointment by City Council to various boards and commissions of the city government.

Mayor Walker adjourned the work session at 5:09 p.m. and Council convened in closed session.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council