

## Going Out Remarks

Elizabeth City, NC

March 14, 2022

I would like to say thanks for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your Interim City Manager for the past 4.5 months. As always, serving here was an experience that I will remember forever. Sometimes not in the most pleasant way but I can take the good with the bad and move on. I try to remember the positives and there were some here so it was not a lost cause.

I look at the progress that has been made on getting last year's (2020-2021) audit started and with a reasonable anticipated completion date to the LGC. Also, with the hope that the current fiscal year's audit will be to them by late September will be considered a positive. Considering how far behind we were, just in case you have forgotten, there were 15 months of unreconciled bank statements just for starters. A lot has been done to get us in the position to begin the 20-21 audit process. If all of this happens, it should relieve some of your concerns and allow you to begin planning for the future. You should be able to begin borrowing for long term projects if needed.

At the very least, it will improve your relationship with the LGC.

The next positive that I see as extremely important is that we have learned that there is still capacity in your Wastewater Treatment Plant that is available for use. If you remember, there were conversations last Summer among your staff about putting a self-imposed moratorium on that would have prohibited any connections to your system, thus completely stopping any new development or growth. Hopefully with this, and the Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) work being planned now, you can delay building a new plant for several years. Building a new plant starts at \$50Million and goes to \$80Million depending on size and treatment process. This is a huge burden that would have to have been paid by the citizens and businesses of Elizabeth City. Hopefully this will be delayed for some time if the results of the I&I work are successful. I am not sure that the citizens of Elizabeth City could afford the increase in rates that would be required to repay the borrowing for this project.

I look at another positive that began with a very negative discussion and that being our relationship with Charter/Spectrum. What started with an increase for the services that they provide to us, we were able to find a solution with their assistance at minimal cost that will correct your signal problem (According to our IT Department) and in this process of review, found that we do not have anything that would be considered current that resembles a Pole Attachment Agreement. Also, our rates for the attachments have not changed for many years. We are in the final draft stages of the agreement and in the end will be increasing your pole attachment revenue by at least \$15,000.00 annually. This is going from what we anticipated a \$9,000.00 annual expenditure to a \$15,000.00 revenue increase. (A net of plus \$24,000.00)

I do not believe that these were the only positive actions that have taken place but do serve as examples. Now it is time to look at the what's left that will need your attention as you move into the future.

Even though there are many things left undone, one that must be high on your priority list should be a complete review of the personnel part of the organization. There are huge voids in the leadership either through vacancies or personnel in places that they are not prepared for. It is difficult for me to understand why so many of these vacancies have occurred and as of this week, another one has happened. Loosing key personnel at the rate that you have recently indicates that a real problem exists and it is time to take a hard look at yourself and the process. I understand that it is difficult to recruit people to this area but I am sure that there are a number of qualified people that would love to come to this area if the environment is right. I am speaking first at the constant bickering among you as City Council Members (Remember, you put this on display at every City Council Meeting) and secondly, how employees are recruited or selected for positions would be my other concern. The process seems to be questionable and this is where I believe the problem starts. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to recruit qualified personnel and I am not sure that you are getting the most qualified. Also, this is where I believe that you are getting employees into positions that they are not qualified for and not ready for the task of the position. I

am not here to call names or point fingers but what I am saying reflects many of the comments that I have heard since coming here, all one needs to do is look and when and where you have problems to start the process of fixing them. Your salary schedule seems very adequate and the area is attractive enough so it does not leave many other areas to look at. Elizabeth City could be a great place to work.

You should only be satisfied with hiring the best qualified candidates and simply put, best qualified does not include the letters or words placed behind their names in degrees or certifications but having the ability to perform is the utmost important thing. Yes, education is important but the employee must be able to perform at the level that the position requires. You have to stop taking or promoting candidates that are not qualified or ready because this is all you get. You are paying enough salary and benefits to get better than you have gotten. The key things that I see to improve here is the environment and the process. Remember, every time that you place an unqualified candidate in a position, it cost more to get the job done and if I need to remind you, it is the citizens that

elect you and you represent suffer. Also, I remind you that they pay the bill. All of it.

You have to expect better because the qualified candidates will more than pay their way. Hopefully the following examples will help you understand what I am saying:

Sentara Hospital Project- Sentara is making some out of the ordinary request for their electric service that will involve huge sums of Dollars and these request are not defined in your rate structure. There are no provisions in the structure on who or how the customer pays for an additional service when one service under normal circumstances would do. In this case, the request amounts to \$2plus million additional cost to this project. I realized that some provisions had to be made to address this and am having the amendments for the rate schedule prepared to cover these cost. These should be to you for your approval at the next City Council meeting.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Capacity-Based on the direction that you were going, you would have been looking at building a new plant very soon. Instead, you are

looking to correct a problem that may buy you years before you are forced to build a new plant.

Charter/Spectrum- What started out as an additional expense turned into the development of a Pole Attachment Agreement which includes an updated rate for the usage of the poles that you own. This will generate an additional \$15,000.00 plus in annual revenue for the City just by recognizing that the current rate had not been changed for years and adjusted for current cost.

I am not pointing these out to pat myself on the back but to emphasize the importance of having people in place that knows what they are doing will pay off.

As I look at your role as City Council Members, I see your role much different from what I have witnessed in my short time here. I see your role as the Policy Maker, the Community Leadership, the Community Planners(Vision) and being that Role Model for what you would want the City to be. From what I have seen, you have acted anything but this. There are some goals that you adopted and since

modified that are very fitting for your role as Council Members and I am going to repeat these just in case you have forgotten:

- Ensure Sound Fiscal Responsibility
- Improve the City's Infrastructure
- Strengthen Inter-governmental, Relationships Including institutes of Higher Education
- Provide Youth and Senior Activities
- Deliver Cost Effective, Quality Services
- Improve the Quality and Safety of all Neighborhoods
- Increase Community-wide Business Development Opportunities to increase the Quantity and Quality of Jobs

It is very difficult for you to reach these goals when you are spending much of your time being divided as a group and discussing issues that are not relevant to the issues that a Council Member should be addressing. There is too much small talk for you to see the real issues that the City currently faces or will face in the future. **The Big Picture**

I see items like the following as ones that you should be discussing:



Wastewater Treatment Plant- You should be getting an understanding on what is at hand and developing solutions with the help of your staff. You need a better understanding of this so you can make an intelligent decision when the time comes weighing the impact on the community and the citizens. Using your goals as a basis.

Storm Water Issues-I am sure that there are a number of storm water problems through-out the City that need addressing but you must consider the future as well. I am referring to the area of Halstead Blvd. that currently being developed. There is no Master Plan for the storm water in this area and now would be the time to develop one before it becomes more developed. You should be looking at a visionary solution that not only addresses the site but the impact down-stream.

Vehicle Replacement Program-You do not have any reasonable program of replacing the fleet of vehicles and I speak specifically of the Police Vehicles. Your program is replacing 5 vehicles per year which means that you expect about 10 years of active life from a vehicle. This may seem all good until you look at the cost of operate after about 5

years. I have signed repair bills that far exceeded the value of the vehicle more than a few times since I have been here. There are 51 issued vehicles in the police department and you have 16 spares. You need this many spares because as the active vehicles break down, a spare has to be placed into service. This is not rocket science on recognizing the problem and developing a solution.

Installment Loans-These are short term loans that seem easy and they are probably easier than saying no but when you have the number of these that you do, it could mean trouble in the near future. I see these as when I want something and do not have the money, I just pull out my credit card and make the purchase. Not even thinking about making the payment. I need to really think if I really need this or if there is another way to pay of it.

Fire Station Replacement-This issue cannot be one where you paid for a nice report and you listened to the consultant then, you put it on the shelf. This seem to be the standard here. The community is shifting and to deliver fire service and maintain your ISO rating, the stations must move. It would seem obvious since the

station was constructed as a metal building which was meant as a short term solution. Maybe someone had a vision then knowing that the shift in the community would occur in the near future.

As a final example –Violent Crime-You have to begin some serious discussions on this. There are far too many lives being lost for something like this to sit on the back burner and think that it is happening everywhere and there is nothing that you can do about it. You have to begin trying some things to see if this can be reduced or eliminated. You cannot just accept this without taking some responsibility.

You adopted a thorough set of goals and if you look through these, you can find each of these issues in them. You can continue to spend your time being divisive and unwilling to work with each other, THE CONSTANT BICKERING or continue to discuss the small items that have little value to the meetings or reach out and get these goals out and try to accomplish them. Your Choice.

Remember, this is not some type of sport game where one side is more powerful than the other. This is one collective group and not two sides representing the Citizens and Businesses of Elizabeth City and only they will be losers.

THANK YOU AGAIN AND GOOD NIGHT .