

**DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022  
9:00 A.M.  
DRAFT MINUTES**

The Durham City Council met for a City Council Budget Retreat virtually via Zoom with the following members present: Mayor Elaine O'Neal, Mayor Pro Tempore Mark-Anthony Middleton and Council Members Javiera Caballero, DeDreana Freeman, Jillian Johnson, Charlie Reece and Leonardo Williams. Absent: None.

Also Present: City Manager Wanda Page, Budget and Management Services Director John Allore, Budget and Management Services Assistant Director Christina Riordan, and Deputy City Clerk Ashley Wyatt.

Budget and Management Director John Allore provided introductory remarks, outlined the flow of the meeting, and introduced the budget staff.

Mayor Elaine O'Neal called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

**[OPENING REMARKS]**

City Manager Page offered opening remarks and welcomed Mayor O'Neal and Council Member Williams to their first budget retreat.

**SUBJECT: RESIDENT SURVEY**

Jason Morado, representing ETC Institute provided a presentation to Council and highlighted the many aspects of the survey as follows:

Distributing 600 resident surveys was the anticipated goal and 727 surveys were received; 12<sup>th</sup> resident survey done on behalf of the City of Durham and had a small margin of error; asked for gender, ethnicity, and household income on the survey; there was a good distribution of the survey throughout the city; 57% of residents chose increased police protection as their number one priority area followed by improvements to school and street maintenance; 13% of residents were dissatisfied with how COVID 19 was handled; 80% of residents were supportive of trained unarmed respondents for the purposes of wellness checks, minor traffic accidents, mental health crisis and violations of loud noise.

The conclusion was that overall, residents had a positive overview of the city and the area in which they lived which increased from the year prior. The City of Durham was ranked above the national average on customer service by 28%. Affordable housing, police, schools and streets were among top priorities to residents and the primary areas

of dissatisfaction were public transportation and schools which was consistent with previous years.

Council Member Williams asked when the data was collected.

Mr. Morado stated that the data had been collected in December 2021.

Council Member Johnson asked if any there had been any trends or disparities between race and ethnicities as it pertained to overall quality of life.

Mr. Morado stated that the data needed a more comprehensive and robust analysis for this assessment.

Council Member Caballero asked if the information was being communicated to the County since some of the services such as schools overlapped between City and County.

Mr. Allore stated that the County utilized a separate survey.

Mr. Morado confirmed that Durham County was going to receive their own results.

City Manager Page advised that she and County leadership met regularly and that she would ensure they received the City's data.

Mayor O'Neal stated that the presentation had been very informative.

Council Member Johnson asked if there was going to be an opportunity to discuss the information more after reviewing the entire survey results.

Director Allore suggested asking any questions to Mr. Morado while he was available at the meeting.

Council Member Johnson stated that she preferred to discuss further after receiving the deeper analysis and expressed surprise that there was a 6% decrease in bus service satisfaction after making bus fares free.

Council Member Reece noted that COVID-19 related disruptions likely contributed to that survey result.

Mayor Pro Tempore Middleton referenced safety concerns over violent incidents on buses and at the bus station as another possibility for that particular survey result.

City Manager Page recognized Acting Director of Finance David Hickman for his services with the City of Durham and congratulated him on his upcoming retirement.

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE**

Andrew Holland, Assistant Director for the Office of Performance and Innovation Division of BMS and Sherry Metcalf Strategic and Performance Manager provided a presentation to Council and highlighted the following:

OPI worked with city departments to collect data to enhance programs and services; outlined what the strategic plan was and the City of Durham's long term vision; described how they helped set priorities based on various information; incorporating the Language Access Plan and described the average 5-year timeline for the Strategic Plan Refresh.

Council Member Johnson asked if Council would be sent a snapshot of what the goals were in order to share with the community.

Ms. Metcalfe stated that she would be sending a brief snapshot over to Council regarding the 5 goals of the City's Strategic Plan.

Council Member Caballero requested a presentation on the Language Access Plan at a future Work Session and appreciated the work of staff on the item.

Mayor Pro Tempore Middleton also requested more information from the Office of Economic and Workforce Development as it pertained to the Strategic Plan, since it was such an important piece on closing the gap on the 'two Durham' narrative.

Council Member Freeman thanked staff for their hard work and they had been addressing large issues.

Council Member Williams also thanked staff and stated that he enjoyed working with them.

**SUBJECT: ECONOMIC UPDATE**

Dr. Michael Walden of NC State University provided an extensive presentation to Council and spoke to the following:

How the nation was recovering from COVID-19; various economic challenges; how certain public policies such as stay at home orders and closing certain sectors like restaurants, had on the economy; economic activity at one point fell by 10%; Durham had been recovering and was close to pre pandemic levels; federal assistance; the need for teleworking and high speed internet; historical knowledge of previous recessions and pandemics in the nation; and that the

labor force anticipation rate had not fully recovered as of December of 2021.

Council Member Freeman expressed concern regarding some of the statistics presented and asked for guidance on future resources for residents that had been displaced during previous economic downturns.

Dr. Walden responded that he was going to look into that and report back.

Council Member Williams asked if people were spending more online as opposed to locally.

Dr. Walden stated that local businesses were feeling the economic impacts of having to compete with larger companies such as Amazon and suggested local business owners communicate to their patrons on how increased costs had directly affected local businesses in an effort to encourage consumers to balance both spending areas.

### **[CLOSING REMARKS]**

Mayor O'Neal commended the professionalism of the City Staff and thanked all for their work.

Council Member Reece recognized Budget Director Allore for his leadership in the Budget Department and looked forward to the next three budget retreats.

City Manager Page thanked staff for their work and provided an overview as to what was to come at the future budget retreats.

### **[ADJOURNMENT- 12:06 PM]**

Ashley Wyatt, CMC  
Deputy City Clerk