

## **ANNUAL STRATEGY MEETING, DAY 1 – MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2026**

The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for an Annual Strategy Session – Day 1 on Monday, March 2, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Ballantyne Hotel, 10000 Ballantyne Commons Parkway, Charlotte, North Carolina with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Council members present were J.D. Mazuera Arias, Ed Driggs, Malcolm Graham, Lawana Mayfield, Joi Mayo, James Mitchell, and Kimberly Owens.

**ABSENT:** Councilmember Renee Johnson

**ABSENT UNTIL NOTED:** Councilmembers Dimple Ajmera, Danté Anderson, and Victoria Watlington

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### **ITEM NO. 1: WELCOME AND OPENING THOUGHTS**

**Mayor Lyles** said good morning. Thanks all of you for being here today. I truly look forward to this time together and the opportunity to focus on our City priorities, and to strengthen our work and the things that we're going to do. As the largest city in North Carolina, we have an opportunity to work to support our residents and keep Charlotte moving forward. I was recently in Raleigh with the House Oversight Committee. That conversation reminded me that we do not stand alone. The work we do here connects directly with our partners at the state level, and relationships really do matter. As many of you know, we'll convene this evening to continue our discussion on the NC-DOT (North Carolina Department of Transportation) 77 Expansion Project. Secretary Johnson will also be coming to Charlotte to host small group meetings with homeowners along I-77 corridor. I hope that in the next few days, we give each other space to come together as a team, strengthen how we work, not just with each other, but with the people that help us do what we do, the state, the ability for us to work with them.

I want to thank the City staff. I know you guys have all worked very hard in organizing this retreat, and the Ballantyne Hotel for hosting us, but I really want to say a big hand, and I hope you will do this with me, to say that Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell has worked on this for several, several months. Maybe he feels like maybe years, but the thing about it is that he has invested his time and effort with almost everyone in this room, and it has made a tremendous difference, and so I really want to say thank you so much for what you've done. You said that we would do this retreat. It was before the snow. We waited and got it just because we can have heat, thank you very much, a lot of heat maybe. I want to say, let's welcome our moderator for the next two days, someone that most of us actually know. Debra Campbell recently retired as City Manager for the City of Asheville where she served seven years, after 45 years of service in local government. She's familiar very much with what we do here in Charlotte, having previously served as the Planning Director for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department, and later as Assistant City Manager. So, please join me in welcoming her, be kind and gentle, kind and gentle. Debra Campbell, please come forward. Thank you, Deb. Welcome home.

**Debra Campbell, Facilitator** said wow, I didn't expect that kind of a response, but thank you all so very, very much, and I really, really appreciate the opportunity to be your facilitator for this important meeting, and you heard a lot about my bio. I think before I go into more detail, we want to see a video in terms of accomplishments, and then we're going to jump into a festive two days. We want to be extremely focused, because I think this meeting is around strategies, and I'll talk more about that after we see the video and give you all a couple of housekeeping things as well.

Video plays.

**Councilmember Watlington arrives at 9:08 a.m.**

Alrighty, yes, give yourselves an applause. This is amazing. If this was a year's worth of work, Mr. Jones, alright, I'm impressed.

So, housekeeping items. Restrooms are out the door to the left and then another left past the food. Wi-Fi connections, use that information that you see on the flipchart, and as you heard, I recently retired from the City of Asheville as City Manager, so I'm actually used to being way, way in the back observing, but also praying that our elected officials will understand that we collectively are a team. We can't have the kind of impact on the community that we want to have without our collective efforts, and I hope that today, as your facilitator, I can help you kind of focus on those strategic initiatives that are needed to positively impact the lives of the people who live and do business and work in this community; that's what we've got to focus on, is that this is not so much about us, it's about our role as leaders in the community and the impact that we can have, and so again over the next two days, hopefully, I will be able to help you decide on those things.

Now, as was noted in your Manager's introductory message in that really nicely, well-documented report, in the introductory section he says that although this event is only two days, it's just the beginning. So, don't feel as though you've got to have all the answers at the end of this meeting, you can't, these two days. I would often share with my Council, my time in Asheville, that resources are so limited and finite, and so having these kinds of strategic sessions to really get laser focused on things that you need to get accomplished and that truly moves the needle, again, on the lives of the people who live, work and do business, is extremely important. So, this meeting is really, really important, and I don't have to tell you all that. So, to help with your discussion, and I hope that what I'm about to go over, just very quickly and briefly, is not to stifle your discussion, but it literally is to kind of provide some guardrails in terms of not what you're discussing, but more how. It's kind of rules of decorum. How will we engage?

So, the first one is active participation, and then there's a check, which means we need you to be fully checked in to this meeting. If you need to use your phone, if you need to do any of those things, maybe step out of the room, so that there's no distraction and we can continue the fruitful conversation that I hope that we will have.

The next one is respectful communication. We're all adults; however, our feelings can still get hurt, so please, please, please be respectful and mindful in terms of the discussion. You can have a different opinion, but it's how you express that opinion.

**Councilmember Anderson arrived at 9:12 a.m.**

Confidentiality and Trust. There may be some things that are discussed in this room that I think we're live televised, so it can't stay in this room. So, make sure that at your tables, if you are discussing some things and there is a request that this be kept confidential, that you do that.

Accountability. You are accountable for your actions today and moving forward, and the accountability is more or less around, when you come up with these strategic initiatives, please, please, please understand that this shouldn't be just talk, this should be a commitment amongst yourselves as Council members, but also to the community.

Then, lastly Collaboration. As I noted earlier, this cannot be done without the collective work of staff, this Council, even the Mayor said, other local governments like the state and possibly, possibly the federal government, and I hope that you all understand that it's the collective wheel.

I actually left out one very important entity, which is the community. Don't forget the community has a huge role in the success of this effort, this Charlotte's on the Move initiative. So, before I ask Meghan Bourne, who serves as the Senior Principal with the McChrystal Group, to provide an overview of the traits of a high-performing team, because that's what it's going to take, you all performing at the highest level of professionalism.

I'm going to ask you to indulge me just one more minute to express a personal note of sincere gratitude and appreciation to your City Manager, Marcus Jones. I was in Asheville during tropical storm Helene. Marcus reached out and said first, "How you doing? How's your family doing?" Secondly, he said, "What do you need?" He provided the resources that we needed amongst a lot of other communities, but I took it personal when Marcus reached out, because he knew me, and I want to thank the Council for picking Asheville last year, and if weather had permitted, you would've been there this year. So, we really, really appreciate your generosity. Now that I've teared it up and everything, thank you again for inviting me, and now I want to invite Meghan Bourne to get this party started.

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## **ITEM NO. 2: TRAITS OF HIGH PERFORMING TEAM**

**Meghan Bourne, Senior Principal, McChrystal Group** said okay, thank you very much, Debra, and thank you everyone, Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and all of Council members. Thank you very much for gifting me this opportunity to speak with you today. It is a topic that is very near and dear to my heart, but first I want to talk to you a little bit about my background. You do also have my bio, but the work that I do is to specialize in teams. How do teams operate? How can a group of individuals become a team? How can a team become a higher performing team, and what's the intentionality that we can put behind that? I always think I see teams everywhere, everywhere I go, and for many of us one of the first teams that we have is our family, and actually I wanted to acknowledge my family, because they're the reason I moved here to Charlotte five years ago. So, I saw in the video at the start that Charlotte is one of the fastest growing cities, and I am one of, it sounds like thousands, of people who are contributing to that. So, I look forward to, and we're working on getting the rest of our family down here as well, so I'm going to try to help that growth continue.

As far as the work that I do, I started it with a background in finance, and I like to say I love the numbers, I love the spreadsheets, but when it comes to actually driving change or having an impact, it's really about the people, and the people are the more dynamic nature. Numbers are kind of numbers, they're straight forward, but it's the people that make the teams, that make the bigger organizations, that then have the impact on the City, like all of you do, that really are the more dynamic and kind of can be more challenging at times. So, I switched my career about 13 years ago. I went back to school and studied teams and leadership, and now I work for a company called McChrystal Group, and because of that job, about two years ago, I had the opportunity to work with Manager Jones and Julia and their team, the Deputy City Managers, and through that I've just gotten more and more involved in the City.

So, what we're going to talk about today is teams, but specifically you as a Council. What does this mean, how can you kind of interpret some of these fundamental concepts that we're going to talk about for your reality as a Council, because it is definitely not a one size fits all? Again, the numbers and the math, it's not that, it's fundamental concepts that we can kind of take and reflect on and apply to whatever your specific context is, both as individuals and as the Council.

So, we just talked about high-performing teams, and now you see group dynamics up there. I'm going to probably have to spend about 45 minutes first on group dynamics, and that'll make a little more sense in just a minute here, but high-performing teams is one element of this kind of bigger spectrum that is groups, and breaking it down really helps you as individuals and as a Council get really laser specific, like focus in on what are some strategies or tactics or behaviors that we can each do very intentionally, so that we can be the team that we want to be? Then, after about that first 45 minutes, we'll talk about trust and the dynamics there. You'll see it's about both simple concepts and then we'll kind of build with some examples, I'll share some examples. I'll ask you to reflect both individually and then in your table discussions, on how do we see this apply, and therefore, how can we take this information and do something about it?

I do want to note any one of these topics could be the whole two days themselves. So, we're not going to kind of solve any big challenges right here in the room in this next 90 minutes, but we're going to try to create the language for you that can be the spark for the conversation today, and then going forward after today. Debra mentioned that this is kind of a journey, and I'm happy to go along that journey with you, and I'm happy to keep checking in, be a resource to any of your working groups, or you as individual Council members, as you go.

So, this is, what I just called the kind of group dynamics spectrum, and what we see is, across the top we see individuals, the groups of individuals, the teams, and the high-performing teams. I'm going to build some of the visuals here, and apologies if they are a little difficult to see, but what you see in the first one, we're all used to this. We see the I as an individual citizen, you as individual citizens. We may not know each other's context, that circle around the people, so it's kind of everyone doing their own operating based on their own context to meet their own goals. When we start to have a group, there's something that brings us together. There's some overlap. There's something that we have in common, and therefore, we're working together at times. We see that one plus one can be two, we also see that it can be zero. This is where the level of effort can be a little more challenging. You're putting in that time, but you don't always see eye to eye, so operating as a group of individuals can be rewarding, but also very frustrating.

When we get to team, one of the big details that changes are those bonds represented by the bigger circle here; that can be the bonds of trust that we're going to talk about that really is at the core of every human interaction. It can also be the bonds of that commitment. You see all these green circles. It's why are we here, what is the common purpose or that core function that really brings us together? What we see also is that one plus one can equal three, but we see that some of the team members have dynamics that are outside of that circle, outside of that common purpose, and that's to be expected. We're all individuals who are parts of many, many groups and many, many teams, so we're going to feel pulled in different directions at different times. Those dotted lines, for example, may be a full-time job that just pulls you and has you kind of committed somewhere else. Your time and mental focus needs to be somewhere else. It could be the difference between being an At-Large member or representing a District, and feeling that kind of pull more towards your District, and how do you operate as a member of the Council while also representing your constituents? So, those differences and those kind of tensions that are created are when we can get that one plus one equals negative two, because now I'm investing a lot more time, I'm investing a lot more energy, and it can feel even more frustrating and like it's more work and we're not seeing the intended benefit of the teams.

So, when we talk about high-performing teams, it can look pretty much the same, right at the start. What you notice is, okay, the outside circle is a little stronger, a little bolder, but what does that actually mean? We all talk about high-performing teams; it's definitely like a catchphrase in these last few years, but what does it actually mean? The idea that we can achieve something that otherwise would not be possible if we didn't bring a bunch of diverse individuals together with those bonds of common purpose and trust, but what does it actually look like? That's kind of the magic that everyone wants to know, and what I often tell people is, we see that actually the difference between a team and a high-performing team is when your individual dynamics, your individual context, changes day to day or week to week, but the whole team shifts with each other. So, if we see the team member on the bottom right corner is pulled more towards their constituents; if that represents a team member that's representing Districts, and for a given topic they are pulled more towards representing their constituents, as well as the team member that in the top left, the rest of the group kind of adjusts and adapts with them, still all within the circle, but at different positions, and it's that idea that we're communicating, we're consistently operating in a way that is for this bigger purpose that brings us together.

Actually, before I go to this overwhelming slide, I do just want to note, this seems kind of like elementary and kind of obvious, and why would I start here? There's a few different

reasons. Partially, that slide that I'm about to show talks about one of the fundamentals of group dynamics being communication, and we've all had experiences, our own experience, whether it's sports teams or a musical or an orchestra or theatre or family dynamics, we've all had our own experiences, so we can talk about teams in very different ways. So, the intent here is to give you guys a common language to start having conversations here in just a moment. Then, that language will then help you again carry this conversation, and turn it into actual actions. What are the strategies, what are the specific things? We can't change it all overnight. We're not going to flip a switch and all of a sudden all these dynamics are different, or our individual contexts suddenly get easier to manage, but what is one or two very specific things that you can leave here today saying, as a Council member, here's what I'm going to do differently. So, again, that's why we start with just these fundamentals.

Now, apologies for the very small font, but I'll kind of orient us here, and then we can actually reflect. You see at the top it says reflect. I'm going to give you guys a few minutes in your notebooks to take some notes on this, but first going down the side, I've kind of alluded to some of these examples, but we see the five fundamental categories of all groups, and that's members. That can be very formal memberships or informal memberships. It can be your level of degree to which you're in the group versus kind of on the fringes of the group. The goals, this isn't simply a strategic plan, it can be your individual goals and the group goals, as well as kind of that bigger purpose that we talked about. Then, the norms. This is like the normative behaviors. The kind of unspoken rules, but there's an important distinction there of, if they're unspoken, can you kind of make them explicit, and how do we operate?

Communications, I've mentioned already, and then leaders. There's, again, that kind of formality of leaders versus people who lead more by influence, and you'll see that change as you go up this to the right here on the spectrum. I point this out, because as you reflect, it's not as simple as, do we fall into the team category, do we fall into the group of individuals column, which one is it? It's just not that cut and dry. So, what I'm going to ask you to do is take a look through this list; I'll leave this up here. I'm going to also show you some reflection questions to let you collect your thoughts for about five minutes, and then you're going to have a discussion at your tables, but one example that I'll give you very quickly is, if I look across the members row, the bottom bullet point talks about the level of connection with team members. Think about that circle that's around each of those people on that visual. How much do I understand my other Council members' context? How much do they understand mine? I might say, well, with some it's really strong, with others it kind of varies, and that may be purely a function of time and how long you've known them, or just how often you get to interact with them. Then if I keep going and look at the goals, I might say, oh, we definitely have smart goals. We have a clear 2030 Plan for the City. We've got metrics that we're tracking towards, but also when I look over at the group of individuals, it talks about individual goals kind of taking priority over group goals. That can be a real source of tension for teams. They want to drive towards agreed upon metrics, but they feel pulled by individual goals. So, it's kind of then, we look at when that tension is created, how are we communicating about that? How are we agreeing to the normative behaviors to help us manage that tension? So, you can see it gets really shades of gray and that's why it's a spectrum at the top; it's not to say as a Council you fall in just one column here. I would like you to kind of reflect on, how do you see any one of these dynamics playing out in your role and your experience with the Council?

So, before I go, I'm going to have everyone actually write down these questions, because then I'll go back, so that you have that more detailed slide up and/or I can go back to the visual as you reflect. Oh, it is in the notebook, okay, oh excellent, thank you very much. Yes, so if you open your binder, this will be one of the pages there. So, if you turn to that page, then you'll have these questions there, and the idea is to just reflect on them. Again, we're going to take five minutes. You have the visuals as well, but I'm happy to put anything back up here on slide on the screen, so that you can think about how much do your fellow Council members really understand your context? Are you one of those people kind of being pulled out towards the edges of the Council, or are you right in the center, and you feel fully all in all the time? It's probably pretty rare

that anyone can feel that level of commitment to just one group, but just some reflection there, and then do you understand that for others? Do they understand your context? Do you understand theirs? Then, starting to think about what I was just mentioning, the where do we fall? What did my experiences with the Council and as a member of this Council, how do I currently perceive us on this spectrum? Is that where I want us to be? It could be yep, I think we're kind of a combination of all these different dynamics, and I'm okay with how we're operating, or is it, I think we're a combination, and here's one or two where I think we can do better and focus this year as a group on really how do we strengthen in this one or two areas. So, that's how we're going to kind of use this time, and let me do a quick time check. I'll start with five minutes. We'll see if people need a few extra minutes to reflect, but just use these questions to collect your thoughts, and then we'll discuss in your tables first, and then as a large group. Any questions?

We'll have you keep discussing as a group. The one thing is, we're going to share out also, so when you have a chance, identify one member of the team who will share out with the bigger group.

If there's any questions that you didn't get to as a group, make sure to take a note, so that you can come back and have that conversation later. We're going to discuss as a big group here in about 60 seconds now.

Now, we want to hear what each table shared. So, we're going to go ahead, and if you haven't already, make sure one of your team members has the table mic and ready to share what you were discussing. I'm actually going to start over here on my right with Councilman Graham or Councilman Mayo. Would you guys like to kind of share what your team reflected on, whether it's to one question in particular, or just what you guys talked about?

**Councilmember Mayo** said yes. We just talked about the importance of building relationships with different members of Council, so that we can get to the high-performing teams. We talked a little bit about a of couple steps we think would be essential, like processing the work. How do we facilitate our meetings? How/when we disclose information, how that's important? That can be with the community and with each other. Lastly, kind of going back to what I said, how do we build trust and transparency with each other and also the community as well? So, we really just talked a lot about like relationships and trying to think through how do we better work together, so that everyone feels included and that their voices are heard?

Ms. Bourne said yes, those relationships like understanding just the circle. What is that kind of series of lived experiences that you're each bringing into this room, and when you've got to jump straight into Council business it's hard to feel like you have the time to build those relationships, and actually trust. You mentioned also, we will make sure we go a layer deeper on that one here in a few minutes as well. How about the table up here?

**Councilmember Owens** said so, we also talked about relationships and about context, and I guess really addressing the first two questions around trying to understand each other's context. I spoke about the fact that I am archetypally focused on justice, and I've come to appreciate that I need to be more open and curious about some of the other aspects of decisionmaking, because my justice lens is so heavy. Danté and Ed both spoke of the backgrounds that they bring to it, and the context that they've been able to form through years of working together, and really coming to trust one another with time, and seeing that repeat of reliability that you've got in a team member that you can kind of have a true north with them. So, I don't know what else. We talked about the context of politics. We can all understand each other's family, and the fact that I'm an attorney, and somebody else is an engineer, and just that background is understood, but coupled with the fact that we're all against a very political time, and so some of those things may not be as reliable an indicator of that person's curiosity as it used to be. You have to have a broader context.

Ms. Bourne said yes, you guys have the printout, but that idea of communication being one of those five foundations. There's a whole other layer to it as elected officials that you all have to navigate both communications with each other, the fact that meetings are live streamed, but also then the fact that there's communication then with the City and you each have to go out and communicate beyond just being here in the room together. So, that just adds a whole other layer of dynamics, that I think it sounds like you all started in kind of the same place so far, but we've got to start with knowing each other as individuals. How about the table over here?

**Councilmember Watlington** said that was the same thing that we had here. We talked a little bit about the context of each one of us, and very heavily leaned into the community, organizing the neighborhood leader space and bringing that to our work. I think one thing that resonated here was authenticity and being able to be congruent in your actions and what you say. I think we landed, if we were to look at the matrix of where we believe we fall as Council, depending on the issue, we're somewhere between group of individuals and team, and I think that that is not our natural bent in terms of the Council members that are sitting here, because we're more relational, more, hey we can have a disagreement and move on to the next thing, and in this environment, particularly like Kimberly was saying, politically there's always that, we're friends today, because we agree on this issue, but tomorrow are we necessarily going to be able to rely on the strength of this relationship, and I think that's what we really would like to focus on and see to move us a little bit further down that spectrum. Did I miss anything?

Ms. Bourne said and anything else? So, to your point then, I wanted to just clarify, so we're somewhere between group of individuals and team, but we would like to keep operating more as a team, but the sheer breadth of topics that all of you have to be knowledgeable on and like represent your constituents for, can create that kind of conflict or that tension, so how do the relationships get stronger to overcome those differences? Okay, anything else. Alright, we'll come to this table.

**Councilmember Mitchell** said so, at our table we talked about definitely trust, and it takes energy and commitment. We were talking about how do we identify those things we could work on? So, Meghan, then bring you back at the end of June 2026, and measure how well we're doing. So, we threw out ideas like trust from closed sessions. How can we work on, in closed session, continue to work together as Council? When the Mayor makes appointments, the Mayor is making appointments based on performance and not on personality. We talked about, let's listen to understand and not rebut. I think we all should give each other grace as we try to become a high-performing team. Let's give each other grace and seek understanding, and I think if we can start making those steps and identify how we can measure it, and then bring you back, Meghan. We have to be committed to work together and trust one another, so it cannot start here and stop here today.

Ms. Bourne said yes, thank you for sharing that, and actually I think that idea of it requires that energy and that effort. There's any number of places that you all can focus, but how do we use things like closed sessions to say, we're going to focus in this area of understanding each other and building relationships, so that through all the tough changing political dynamics, or whatever it might be, we stay as a team. That's why I have those, again, I mentioned at the beginning, I'm a numbers person, so you see I've got those one plus one equals, and the negative numbers get to that point of when you've invested that time and that effort, and you commit to that as a team, you want to start to see the payoff in terms of outcomes and closer relationships, but it is a challenge. Debra, anything else as you were taking some notes for me? Anything else that you'd comment on for the group?

**Debra Campbell, Facilitator** said I guess the only thing that I would add is that it's a journey, and there's ebbs and flows, and sometimes you're going to remember all of those things that you're talking about today, and then sometimes you're going to get out of line. However, it is how do you respond? How do you internalize and think about, oh man, I promised that I was going to do X, and I know I failed. So, now what do I do with

that information? Do I go to that individual? Do I go to the group and say, hey, I was out of line? In Asheville, we went through the same thing, but we posted, this is how we're going to behave in Council meetings and it was at the dais. So, it was constantly in their faces about this is what we agreed, remember in the retreat. They didn't always do it, but they agreed to write it down, and that's what's important ya'll, is when it's written down and it's in your face it makes a difference.

**Councilmember Mayfield** said I think we also need to take a moment to give space to acknowledge hurt. So, if we've had conversations and/or if we felt like something was done that was perceived as intentional, because of relationship, even if we want to move forward, until we truly address that directly, it makes it difficult. So, if we have a conversation, and we decide, okay, this is how we're going to be moving forward, and then you do something that's in direct contradiction, whether that's through a vote on Monday or an interview or something. Then, you're opposed to that being able to heal under the Band-Aid, you keep pulling it and playing with that scab. If we don't take the moment, and the challenge is, we don't have the space to do it, because Council is recorded, retreat we've got recorders, so we don't have that moment to have that real conversation, and sometimes it needs to be a one-on-one, but sometimes it needs to be a small group, so that there's a witness to the accountability. That's a reality of where we are, because we are healing as we started at the beginning, and if I can't trust you, because of your actions, when I tell you who I am believe it, when someone shows you who they are believe it, but at that same time, we can change and we can grow. We don't get to give each other the grace to see that growth if we didn't take the moment to address the hurt, and then through our actions do something different. I think there's a space where I wanted to at least put that into this room, because there is some hurt from different people at different instances that has not healed, and therefore, the way you're maneuvering, for me, it feels like you're not maneuvering towards team and high performance, you're clearly comfortable maneuvering as individual, not even group individual. Part of that is because of the hurt, not the work.

Ms. Bourne said yes, I really appreciate you calling that out, because that is some of the tough conversations that are necessary to move forward as a group, and I think that your point of needing the space to have that level, and actually some of the comments you made we're going to talk about in the trust section of how and when. Sometimes it's a matter of time and number of interactions to build trust with someone, and it's not I actively distrust them, but I just don't yet have trust, and then versus I actively distrust. The strategies for how you address that over time are different depending on which situation it is.

**Councilmember Anderson** said so, I don't want to jump ahead too far into your trust section, but in my experience professionally when we've done this work of high-performing teams, and trying to figure out where the individuals and the team are oriented, I have been surprised historically that most people, their original orientation around trust is distrust. Distrust is zero, and then you have to build from there. My orientation with trust is I start with trust. I start at whatever that highest level of trust is, and then it gets degraded over experiences and interaction. So, I think it would be interesting to see as a group where our individual orientation is with trust, where we begin, and then what are the steps that either erode trust or build and develop trust.

Ms. Bourne said yes, I really appreciate that. I was going to say, unless anyone has something else, that's actually what we're going to jump to next, is exactly that. So, I wanted to again just mention, since you guys have this, this is something that again dynamic it will keep changing over time, so just using this as a resource to kind of come back to, and when you have an interaction with a colleague in the coming weeks, thinking back, oh, that's what this is, it feels more like they're operating like an individual. So, this can give you that language to then enter into what is going to be probably a pretty tough conversation, but if you just have this experience here today, you can use resources like this as that jumping off point to again continue the conversation.

So, I'll come back to the actions here at the end, but what we've tried to do is say, in each of these two sections what are two things that you can all do as individuals and/or you'll see there's an option in groups, in smaller groups, or in a group as a whole, but we'll come back these, and again you have these printed as well.

First, we want to go into trust, and before I get there I do want to mention, we're going to build up, you see that we're going to start with some simple concepts, and then we're going to actually talk about, okay, what are some examples of how these apply? Some of them are going to be very tough conversations, some purely require time, and others are more of like, oh yeah, we can all agree to things like rules of decorum and how do tools like that also help maintain the foundation for trust? So, we're going to talk about it at three different levels, but I'd love to kind of keep these conversations going that we've already started.

Actually, to start, I want to note that there's a paradox. There is a very, very clear paradox here that is simultaneously, at all times, trust is fundamentally very simple concepts that have been studied and proven over time, and yet, they interact in ways that are impossibly complex, and I don't use that word lightly. Impossibly, it is not just hyperbole. If we think about the number of one-on-one interactions that are possible in this room right now, and the amount of context that we're all bringing into this room that we don't understand about each other, you can see how the dynamics of trust one-on-one versus small groups versus the entire room, can feel very overwhelming. I always like to say, either everyone's an expert, or no one is, and what do I mean by that? So, I have a niece who's in fourth grade here in CMS (Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools), and I like to talk about trust quite a bit, I started studying it about 13 years ago, and so I talk to my niece and my nephew about this, and when she was in third grade she could memorize some of these concepts that we're about to talk about. She could even tell me why she does or does not trust certain classmates or certain friends. So, it's a human experience that we all have from a very young age. Nothing we're about to talk about is groundbreaking new evidence or new research, but at the same time no matter how long you have studied it or experienced it, it's going to keep changing. There's no magic solution that says, oh, I've got it now, now I can have trusting relationships all the time every time. So, what we're going to talk through is, how does this start simple and get harder and harder to understand, and when it gets to the point of being overwhelming, what do I do? What are the strategies that we can do to kind of take it back to the fundamentals?

So, we're going to start here at the interpersonal level, the one-on-one dynamics, before we build up. So, before I show you this next visual, this next kind of model, I want to point out two concepts, and actually two of the tables already brought this up of, it's about perceived trustworthiness. It's not simply, I trust you, I don't trust you, that's oversimplifying it. It's how do your actions, your behaviors impact my perception of you as being trustworthy, and is there a match between your intention? I might behave in a way that I intend to earn your trust. I'm not trying to have to you distrust me, but you're perceiving me in a way that is not helpful, that I am not being helpful to you and not building our trust. I'll share a specific example from my own experience to help make that point a little more clearly, and then at the bottom you see actually the study that this is adapted from.

It's important to note trust has been like academically studied for going on 100 years now, many, many studies since the 1960s, to the point that by the 1990s, there were metastudies, so literally studies of other studies to identify the themes across the studies. So, again, for people like me who love the details, love the numbers, that's like exciting reading. I promise you it is not actually that exciting for most people, and you're like I don't need to read a 200-page study, I just kind of experience it. So, that's where we're going to bring it up a level, but I share all that, because this study in particular studied dozens of, again, I'm saying the word studies like 15 times already, but what you realize is there's any number of ways people can refer to concepts of trust, character or integrity, is it capability or is it competence? The point is these types of metastudies have found we might use different vocab and we might mean nuanced deep things in different situations, but really it all boils down to anywhere between three

and six fundamental concepts. So, that's where we're going to start today, and I'm going to just quickly kind of talk us through each of them, and while I do this though, you'll be automatically thinking, and I encourage you to keep thinking about multiple interactions, whether it's with your fellow Council members, with co-workers, where you have experienced these, both it helped build trust or it did not help build trust. So, the competence, simply do I have that confidence in the person's knowledge, skills and abilities?

**Councilmember Ajmera arrived at 10:10 a.m.**

So, we've already talked about the wide array of topics that all of you have to be informed on, so that alone is challenging. So, some of the ability here might be simply time for the pre-reads, or time to prep for a working group meeting, and it's demonstrating that to your fellow Council members, so that they have confidence in your competence. It may be things actually we heard about community building skills. Like, some of you bring negotiation skills, some bring community building skills. What is the combination of skills and experiences that you each bring into Council that you don't all have to be experts at all of them, but can appreciate those different skills that each other have?

Benevolence. I always hesitate, because we have the confidence that the person has the disposition to do what's good. Good is a dangerous word there, because it's very much subjective of how I define good, but the idea being, this is not simply do I like the other person, do they like me? It's more of, am I confident that they have an orientation to do something good for something that we both care about? So, an example here is, I have co-workers that I wouldn't necessarily say like we are best friends, I would hang out with them outside of work. I don't care to spend much time beyond when we interact at work, and I don't necessarily worry do they like me, and I don't necessarily have to like them; it's we care about the project that we're working on and we care about our company as a whole, and that there is sufficient for me. What I have found, though, is other team members might say, no, I need to know that you care about me as a person also. So, that little nuanced difference can be, I'm going in thinking I have benevolence in mind, and I'm trying to demonstrate benevolence for the work that we're doing, but if someone else thinks of benevolence as, do you care about me as a person first, then we can do the work together, we already have a mismatch, so we're at risk of kind of getting off on the wrong foot from the get go.

Reliability. Is that just showing up with consistent behaviors? That might look like the rules of decorum, showing up for meetings, and then accepting ownership for, not just how you behave in the meetings, but this one might be, we voted, we agreed, we made a decision, we may not all like it, but we agreed that here's how we're going to show up with the media, or here's how we're going to show up with our constituents. Am I going to trust that my fellow Council members are going to reliably stick to, here's the messaging that we decided upon? So, again, you can see, we're already getting into tougher and tougher conversations, and so far, we still just have a simple Venn diagram. We add, once again, context, that outside circle. I always point this out, because people say, do you have to hit the bullseye? The short answer is no, you don't have to have all three at all times. An example would be if I have a family member who needs a surgical procedure. That doctor does not necessarily have to have the benevolence to care about me or my family member. I just want them to be reliable and show up, and then have the competence. I want them to be the best at their skill. So, I share that again, because I don't necessarily want this to turn into something of, you can point to it and say, see, that's why I don't trust you. So, that's important, and I mentioned at the beginning, the intent of today is kind of the spark for discussions. We need to make sure we leverage these and have some conversations of how to have those discussions in ways that are productive and constructive for operating as a team as the Council. We'll talk more about that, and you will definitely have time to kind of reflect and then talk in small groups again.

So, now, I'm going to share that example. I'm going to start to show how this gets more complex, and Councilman Anderson, you mentioned, I love what you said earlier about

how you show up, how you start your kind of default position for trust. As you were describing that, I was thinking the exact opposite. I'm one of those people who starts with, nope, you've got to earn the trust, I'm not starting by giving you trust, and I see some head nods around the room. Just simply knowing that, of what is people's default position can be key. This example I'm going to share was the first example I reflected on 13 years ago when I first started studying all this. It was a client that I had, and we showed up, and I now know, I did not know at the time, that we had what I would just call different defaults. We had different default settings to our trust preferences. So again, that simply Venn diagram, you can see it's represented by, I have competence at the front, reliability on the top. I like to lead by demonstrating competence and reliability, and yes of course, benevolence is important, but if we care about the team or we care about the project or the outcomes, that's good enough, we'll get to know each other over time. This client was pretty much the exact opposite. She wanted to know that I cared about her as a person first. So, when I showed up with project plans and ready to tell her how we were going to do this next 12 months' worth of work and what we were going to achieve together, she was kind of saying, slow down, who's on your team, and do you even know my team? So, this is where I'd say we had a mismatch, and we've all felt this; it's just like you're talking past each other. You're well intended in your behaviors, your conversations, but there's just this mismatch, and it's frustrating.

We've all had many of these situations, many of these relationships, and then we add to it those trust walls, that's what I call it. So, in academic technical terms, this is called your propensity to trust. What is your natural disposition for how you walk into any given relationship? I like to say I'm the person there with the 18-inch thick titanium reinforced steel walls, as far as my trust walls, but then there's some people who say, no, no, no, it's more like a filter. I'm going to trust you. I'm going to have a little bit of guard up, but I'm going to trust you until you prove over time that I cannot trust you, but again that proof is my perception of your behaviors. So, even that starts to get a little bit messy. Yes, please, thank you, I would love questions.

Ms. Watlington said well, I just wanted to know, and if you're about to get here, apologies for jumping ahead, but I think of another kind of filter or overlay on this, and I was curious of what your opinions were there. I may be fine to trust you to do X, Y, Z, but I'm not going to trust you to do this. Like there's degrees to trust, so I was curious as to how that integrated into here?

Ms. Bourne said yes, absolutely, that's where I would say the context comes in, in the context of the Council. I may trust you on this working group where we have been working together for a long period of time. I have a lot of interactions, and so, I'm going to trust that we're going to get this work done together, or how you're going to show up to the working group. If all of a sudden, there's a new topic, a new project or opportunity, and we see it very differently, because it impacts our constituents, or our interest in the City very differently, absolutely. So, it is not a one size fits all, that's part of why we say the impossibly complex, because you can have different layers of trust with the same person in different context, but it goes back to, okay, what is it? Is it purely a matter of time, and this is a new project, and we can go into this more intentional, because we know we're starting with different perspectives here, or is it, we're already six months into this, we are actively not trusting each other, and it's kind of limiting how effective we can be as a working group or as the Council as a whole? How do you go back to the fundamentals and have those kinds of closed-door one-on-ones if necessary to kind of reset on trust?

Ms. Wallington said can I ask you a follow-up?

Ms. Bourne said please.

Ms. Watlington said so, to that point structurally, and I know that Malcolm likes to say this, we are a group of independent contractors. We were hired by our constituents, and so ultimately, well, I'll speak for myself, my ultimate loyalty is to my constituents, and so I don't find that I'm acting as an independent agent if you will. So, I guess what I'm asking is, by design then, and I'm putting it in the room so you can correct me, I don't

know if we'll ever get to a place where our ultimate trust or our loyalty or whatever to each other helps us come to the same place on any outcome, because there's going to be times, because we represent different constituencies, that it will never be a 100 percent alignment. So, I'm just curious as to how that shows up in this type of situation?

Ms. Bourne said so, yes, the reality is there are certain tensions that will always exist, and not everything can be win-win. If you take the time to get to consensus, you'll just never get there, and that's not in the interest of the City either. So, that's where if I think back to the other visual where there's a thicker green circle, in this case I'd say that's the interest of the City as a whole, and so it's, my perspective on this particular topic may not be what we decide to go with, but I do believe that my fellow Council members, I trust that they have the interest of the City as a whole, even though my constituents are going to be frustrated with this particular project. So, it's that ability to kind of separate the situation and still focus on the bigger bonds and the bigger kind of outcomes that you're driving for, but even that takes the hard discussions that you guys were talking about, because you can't just say, okay, we're going to focus on the City, because then it does feel like the constituents are not your priority, so that's a reality of a tension. Yes.

**Councilmember Driggs** said I just wanted to mention, it is not binary. So, Ms. Anderson talked before about, do I start from a position of trust. I start from a position of assuming that all people are good people, fundamentally. I start from there, but do I trust them to the extent that I would tell them something that I really don't want other people to hear? Can we have a conversation that is candid, but not what we would want to have in public? It's not a question of secrecy, it's just a question of having the freedom to explore certain things and talk about things. Then, there is distrust, and so that's minus trust, and I think a lot of people are somewhere in the middle. They may just not really know, or they're a little careful, because they're not at the level of confidence where they can kind of have an exchange that is personal and private, at the same time they're not assuming something bad. So, I think it's trust, middle zone, and distrust. Thank you.

Ms. Bourne said yes, I appreciate you sharing that. Again, there's layers to it, and it's more of a spectrum as well. To your point, sir, it's not just binary of trust or distrust, and that's important to recognize if you decide to have some of these conversations, whether it's just, okay, it's not distrust but it's also not full trust, it's somewhere here in the middle. How you approach that conversation may be different. If you reflect and realize, oh, we might actually have just a misalignment of how we default think about trust, that your strategy for going into that conversation, you can now have a pretty clear gameplan of let's talk about, let's use some of these slides or these frameworks to start the conversation on, here's how I'm coming into this meeting. I want to show you my competence on this particular topic. I'm not trying to be a know it all. I'm not trying to tell you my way is the right way. I'm just trying, this is my default position. How am I showing up to you? The ability to have that conversation, to your point sir, requires different levels of skill and time. Whereas, if it's more of a no, we actively distrust each other, that's where you might need that third party, whether it's a professional mediator or simply a fellow Council member, so that you have certain conversations in groups of three or four, because it's, we need to make sure we're all on the same page with what was just said and decided to the point of, do we trust, are we somewhere in the middle, or is it active distrust? How you apply these simple concepts will vary, but it can help you kind of have a strategy going into those conversations. Please feel free to keep asking questions or sharing additional thoughts.

So, this second example is more of that, we all love these situations where its, oh, we've got a match. I may have like a lower propensity to trust still, but you see the Venn diagrams there at the top are more similar, and so we just hit it off, the way we're able to build trust, it feels easier. So, someone's going to start having conversations, start kind of removing those walls, and then you feel like we really are in this together, that's where back on the teams, individuals to groups to teams, you saw some of the people were like overlapping. It's because they're working on common interests, their bonds of trust are stronger. When it happens this naturally, it feels great, but this is also a risk,

because then you think that's the only way I trust people, is if it's easy and we have the same default, and you don't necessarily want to spend the time and the effort on the difficult conversations, that it requires if we go back to this example of kind of the mismatch. That's where I want to caution us and take a few more minutes just to talk about, okay, it's not well throw up your hands, it's at a loss, and here's the people that I again can feel like I get along well with. I would encourage you to reflect on those situations, and even say, is it get along or is it, oh, we have similar starting points for trust, and that's part of why this feels easier to build a relationship with them? When it doesn't feel easy, how can I still get started and not just kind of say, oh, I distrust that person, I'm not going to build a relationship.

So, it really boils down to three options. Of course, like everything, there's nuance to all of this, but you can just say, I'm sticking to my default. I prioritize competence first, so I expect that from everyone else. I'm going to show up and demonstrate competence and reliability, and we'll see how they show up. I'd love to tell you it's like a 50/50 chance, as far as what is the likelihood that you'll build trust over time, but as we've all just kind of revealed already, there's so many changing dynamics that I would put the likelihood that that type of relationship with the differing trust preferences and no clear strategy or intention going in to kind of build the relationship, is probably significantly less than 50/50 that it works out to kind of progressing towards trust.

Another option is removing your walls. So, kind of saying, I like to think of this as like the game of battleship where over time I can observe how you email, I can observe or understand what other Council members know about you, or ask you questions, have the one-on-ones and get to know you, but if I'm the kind of person who says, I start from a default position of trust, I'm just going to tell all of my fellow Council members that, and we're going to start there. That can feel very uncomfortable, though, for those of us who are more of the low propensity to trust, those kind of thicker walls. So, again, just simply using this and telling people like, hey, I'm more a person A, so I appreciate what you're doing by trying to remove your walls so that we can have this conversation, but I'm going to tell you right up front, I'm still going to be somewhat reserved here.

Ms. Anderson said so, I have a question around the benevolence circle in the Venn diagram, because I think the competence and the reliability is pretty direct. There's a direct definition of what that means, you show up on time, you do what you say you're going to do, and you demonstrate competencies, but for the benevolence portion, this question of disposition of what's good and considered the interest of others, it's sort of like the question of, who are the others? Because as Ms. Watlington just said, she is sitting here because of her constituents, and she's an At-Large Council member. I'm a District Representative, and of course I represent District One, but we all vote on every single item that's in our agenda. So, we all vote for the good of the City of Charlotte. However, we might have different polarities around the interest of others, and I feel like that there's a gradient overlay there that could be more crystalized for us, and I think that might be an origin of different types of action, because I can be super passionate about the constituents of District One, and only want to do what's right for District One, but when that item is on the agenda, we're all voting for that item as it relates to all residents of the City of Charlotte.

Ms. Bourne said yes, that's a very important call out, and that's one of those examples where your definition of others and that benevolence in that case, when it comes to benevolence, is certainly different than your other group members here. So, that's where there is no simple answer. I think just simply the fact that you guys can acknowledge that and understanding, yes, I'm At-Large versus I'm a District Representative is a start, but taking it a layer deeper to have, again oftentimes those outside of the formal meetings when it's time to vote, the conversations to say, here's how this impacts your constituents, but here's how it impacts my constituents, or here's what I'm constantly hearing, and that's that just time to really understand, and that's why we say consider others. It's not that I'm going to agree with you, it's not that I'm going to say, okay, my constituents are more important, or my constituents don't matter as much as yours. You guys would never say that. It's more of, I recognize and appreciate that you have a different group of others who you represent, but together as we are the

Council, and so we all have to kind of index back towards the City as a whole, and that's a really hard type of conversation to have that's going to just take reps over time to keep practicing it.

Then, the third one is, I just call it get curious. That's the observing. Things like obviously how we interact in meetings, but how each other kind of show up at public events, or how you send emails. I always tell people this, and they think it's a joke. To this day, I send emails and I write it out, and it's like two to three direct sentences, and I have to go back and remember like the basic greeting of like, hi, how are you, how was your weekend? It's not necessarily good or bad, it simply is a reality of, I remember benevolence and caring about people's bigger context is really important to people. It's not my default, but it is something that now I have learned over time, and so I have ways of doing it that are just still not natural to me, but they're things that I just do as my new default, I guess I would say.

So, the question is, and what we're going to do now, is give you time to reflect on what's your default? What are some of those things that you might already be doing? Because again, you've had years of experience here, so you might already be doing some of these. So, it might be what is my default when I think about trust in these terms we've just talked through, and how do I reflect on those and recognize something new, or recognize something I've already been doing, and is it working or is there something I want to tweak or change about how I'm showing up in different relationships? So, again, we'll give you guys five minutes. We're going to start with just individual reflection here. Let's give everyone time to kind of collect their thoughts, and then I'll do a quick time check with Debra and we'll see where we are for a group discussion.

Ms. Campbell said actually, I think I'm sensing and I've gotten direction, that you all want to kind of continue this conversation. It's so important, because the rest of the day, you're getting into the projects and the strategies and the initiatives, and this literally is the foundation of how you move into that conversation and make those conversations a lot more productive and fruitful and so forth.

So, if I could just add, and I promised the Mayor Pro Tem that I was going to bring this to you all. I have a mentor, and they consistently tell me relationships are more important than projects, and what that means is that if we work on building relationships we can work through really complicated things, because we have dealt with, okay, can I trust this person? I do the same thing with emails or a text message, good morning, I've got to treat you as a person first, then we move on to all those technical things that are so important to us. The last thing that I would leave you with is that I know you all have been elected individually, but you make decisions collectively. So to make collective decisions you have to build relationships and you have to build trust and you have to also work collaboratively to provide the best impact you can for your District, for the community at large. Yes, intuitively we think about where we are and who we represent. We always do that as an elected official, and as staff we do that, but what we have to remember though, is that you individually do not decide. You contribute to a decision, and how you make that contribution or bring those things to the table is really, really important. So, relationships are more important than projects, and believe it or not, it really helps with conflict resolution, it really does, and problem solving. Thanks.

Ms. Bourne said thank you very much. I appreciate bringing it home, making sure it's relevant to the Council, and to that point we're going to have you just take five minutes now. We'll say we'll start with three, I'll keep an eye on everyone, but actually write some notes for yourself in response to what is my default? If I told you right now that I wanted you to rank these as far as how you perceive the trustworthiness of others, how would you rank them? So, that's what I mean, default prioritization of these three. To the point of some of the conversation, that default ranking might be different for different context. So, think about some of the different contexts, and where that might be different. Just write yourself a few notes on that, and then think about how is your natural propensity to trust influencing all of this as well.

Ms. Campbell said after those five minutes, then we're going to take a break earlier, because we're going to continue this conversation, because you guys have been sitting for a while and may need to stretch a little bit.

The meeting recessed at 10:40 a.m. and reconvened at 10:50 a.m.

You trust my writing, but I am going to type up all of this for us to review in the morning, and I may even have some of it typed up very soon while you guys are on break. So, we'll get this to you, have no fear. If you can't read it, I'll have it typed up for you. Thanks.

Ms. Bourne said so, we're going to see if you guys have any kind of reflections that you want to share with the group, or just insights about these simple concepts, because I'm going to touch briefly on how this keeps getting increasingly more complex, and then we're going to talk about again those rules of decorum and what value do they bring when it comes to trust? So, anyone want to share what you reflected on, or questions that you have that you just kind of want to put out there for the group?

Ms. Owens said yes, so I was actually surprised, because before I thought about it, I would have just very quickly said that competence was my first, and as I deeply went into the question, I realized it's actually my last, and I say that because I assume that if you're in this role you are competent. So, I don't ever need anyone to prove that to me. The voters have already weighed in on that, and I respect democracy in a sense so much that that is just a default for me. So, my first one is actually benevolence, but not benevolence in the sense of a false, like I really need it to be authentic benevolence. I need to believe that you are a good and just person who is not self-focused or greedy. I need to believe that you are not lying or misleading. I need to believe that you value the input of other people. Basically, I just need to know that you have a good and just heart, and if then you don't remember a meeting, or you prove yourself to be unreliable in some fashion, because I know you're doing it with a good and just heart, I'm much more able to forgive a degree of incompetence or a degree of unreliability, and that was very surprising to me, because as you were talking and you were giving the examples, I know that I'm a very direct person, so I don't always even remember to go back into the email and add a bunch of stuff, and so I do have that energy when I communicate, and so I was rejecting that, but as I really think about it, I think benevolence for me is the single most important one, and that surprised me.

Ms. Bourne said yes, and I appreciate you sharing, Councilman Owens, and I think that insight too of just how you defined it and described your perception of benevolence. I saw a lot of heads nodding around the room, so it's do we have those common definitions, or just hearing how you experience it in others, allows you guys to then kind of, if you feel like it's not there, the ability to try to talk about it and say, is it really not there, or are we just perceiving each other ways that we don't intend. Anyone else?

**Councilmember Mazuera Arias** said we spoke about kind of the precursors that come with building trust, and we spoke about having respect and honesty as those precursors. Also, kind of, when we talk about the different context in situations, people's already perceived notion of what trust is to them. For example, I think folks may oftentimes confuse trust with doing what they want us to do, and that doesn't have to be the case. We all represent different constituents, we all have different lines of ideologies, different thoughts, different backgrounds. It's natural for us as a Council to have different opinions, and to make decisions differently. That does not mean I don't trust you. I think that is, for me at least personally, one of the biggest challenges we might have as a Council, is that I might not do what you want me to do, but that doesn't mean I don't trust you or respect you as a colleague. As I've told a lot of my Council members, I might disagree on a lot of things, but you will always expect honesty and respect from me. I think, to that point, I see benevolence and reliability as kind of equals to me. I think about them in the same importance, because when it says, will you show consistent behaviors and accept ownership for those behaviors, for me that ownership part is being honest and respect, because you can be in here solely for political reasons, own that. I would respect and trust somebody even though I might disagree

with that if you're solely here for political reasons, or if you are solely for your district and want to focus just on community stuff, own that, and so, I like to think I own that part. So, that's how I think about these concepts.

Ms. Bourne said I appreciate you sharing that, and again those are some kind of tough concepts to get out there. So, the ability to say, here's how they're related and here's how you see them showing up, and then that idea of, trust does not mean always agreeing, is a tough one. We don't have time to go into conflict management and conflict styles and all of that, but the headliner of it is, it's the same level of simple fundamental concepts in very dynamic situations, and one of the key details is that, simply because we disagree does not mean we have to be in conflict, and it doesn't mean that we have to then lose trust in each other. So, thank you for sharing that.

Ms. Watlington said to that end, going back to Councilmember Mayfield's comment about counting to six. If you know we don't agree and you don't engage, to me that is connected to trust, because like exactly what Councilmember Mazuera Arias just said is, I'm going to be honest and you're going to know where I stand, and I think sometimes the efficiency of getting something through happens at the expense of that relationship piece, because then you lose trust. If you only ever bring me good news, then I wonder what you're not bringing. As I look at my prioritization, I think that shows up for me just, depending on where I'm going to place you, is the order. I start with competence, because at the end of the day I do have a bend towards, are we executing the work? I can be an activist. I can be whoever. I don't have to sit in this seat. So, I need you to be able to execute. If you're someone that I am going to look to for guidance or mentorship or something of that nature, then benevolence comes next, because I need to know that you are operating from a place of good. That piece for me you have to earn, and then the reliability comes next, but if it's pretty clear to me early on that, alright, we're going to be at this level of relationship, that it's going to be functional, I just need you to be competent and reliable, the rest of it is fine by me. I definitely think they overlap.

Ms. Bourne said yes, I appreciate you sharing that as well. If we think about these arrows in this little diagram, some of them can go straight through people's walls. So, I don't have to remove my walls. If people know that about you, then they know that that's what you expect, then they can say, hey, I'm showing up with this, I'm coming prepared, we only have 30 minutes to talk, so I'm going to jump right in, and that's not because I don't care about you as a person, it's because we're on this team that has agreed to work on trust, so we're going to jump right in, and the others can come over time. So, again, that's an example of what is really a pretty silly looking diagram, it is much more complex in real life, but how you can kind of experience it and use it for interactions.

Mr. Driggs said so, we're talking I would say in kind of generalities here, and it might be good to think about a real world example, a day in the life. So, a member has an idea, has a notion for something that would require a vote. So, it might be related to rezoning, it might be budget related, whatever, and so you think about it, and you think about the people landscape you're in, and you think about which people can I assume would probably agree with me on that and don't need a lot of persuasion. Then you think about the people who know the most about the subject, because they've been in that space, and you do kind of an assessment. How do I proceed? What do I need in order to get what I'm trying to accomplish? On the basis of that, you start connecting with people. So, it's not a simple, hey, I trust that person or I don't trust that person. It's a strategy, and that strategy will be influenced about what you know about the people or the feeling you have about them. I can call so and so and talk this over without going public. Like I can start to explore and test my colleagues a little bit on this question, and then some people you might not want to do that, because you think they are really going to be opposed and you don't want to make it easier for them to organize the opposition. So, I'm just saying, when I kind of am in these situations, it's not clearcut in terms of do I like the person, do I trust the person. It's strategic, and that strategy is going to vary a lot depending on what it is. Are we talking about more money for affordable housing? Am I trying to get a difficult rezoning approved in my district, which could be a policy question, like the rezoning has to do, as was the case years ago, with affordable

housing, and there was a broadly held opinion we needed to do more affordable housing around here in this District. So, I knew that as I went forward with that particular project, there was going to be a larger context, and the fact is that all of us in one level or another are At-Large members. We are all At-Large members. So, yes, we are also seven of us District members, but many of the votes that we take are not about our district specifically, most of them. Most of them are kind of City-wide issues that we have to deal with, and so then we bring our district perspective to that conversation, but we needed to take some responsibility also for the whole City. So, as I listen to this, and I try to translate it into, okay, what do you actually do when you consider all these issues of trust and so on? It really has to do, getting back to what you were talking about, with knowing the people. Spending some time to get to know the people you're working with, so that as you strategize you know what to expect when you call them up, and that will also inform how you talk to them. Do I trust them and tell them things that could be used against me if somebody else knew them, and so on. So, that's harder I think to try to capture in a meeting like this, because it's the product of a lot of time spent with everybody in the group.

Ms. Bourne said I appreciate you giving us that translation, because that is important, that this isn't just an academic discussion, it's a how does this really show up in our interactions? Do you have something?

Ms. Owens said I was just going to draw a contrast to the manner in which Councilmember Driggs views things to the way maybe I do, and some of that is probably born of naivety and this is my first rodeo. So, even on a zoning, I don't go in necessarily with a decision. I go in with a curiosity, and then I talk to people not knowing where they're going to be on it, and willing and able to be persuaded by that. So, that element of strategy and that element, that isn't in me yet. I don't know if it's something that grows with time, but I also don't want to lose that curiosity and that willingness to appreciate that I don't know what I don't know about a whole lot of issues, and I enjoy the process of getting there with others. So, for me, I don't want to say strategy is a dirty word; obviously, it's the way things get done, but my goal is not how can I talk to one person who views something and in a way that I'm holding something back. It's very just open, and maybe that doesn't work, but that's the process I enjoy and the one I function best in.

Ms. Bourne said yes, and that's just important for the fellow Council members to understand that about the different ways that each of you show up, because I bet if we had time to go around and ask you each to reflect on that, and how you'd show up, it might be different and there might be even other nuances, but simply the ability to mention that, so that the other Council members know that about engaging with you in particular, or sir, you, and I will come back to this diagram. I know I jumped to a very complex looking diagram, but Mayor Pro Tem.

Mr. Mitchell said so, Meghan, I'm going to try to make three points very quickly, because I think trust has to be a commitment that each individual has to make on their own, because it's not going to happen overnight. So, I'm going to give you kind of three examples. Number one, I trust Councilmember Mayfield, because we have worked together longer, but I will tell you on the third Monday of each month when she votes no on every rezoning, it irritates me, but I can respect that, because of the trust we have established. So, trust is not voting with me all the time. Trust is, I respect your opinion enough that we can agree to disagree and still go out to eat at, where do I have to take you all the time, we go to Outback? I have to take her to Outback, and so I'm saying to all my colleagues, it takes energy though and commitment on Councilmember Mayfield and myself.

Then let's talk about grace as it relates to trust, if we have grace and we seek to understand it. When the Mayor first got elected, she used to drive me crazy, because she was so process driven, and I'm like the energizer bunny, I try to get the floor, and I don't need directions, I just want to show up. Well, the Mayor would say, no, you've got to go I-85, I-95, and she used to irritate me, and I'd say, why is she so process driven, but through grace and understanding, I need to respect those who have a process lens

like Dr. Watlington, that engineer brain, who if it isn't on page 6.7, she doesn't believe it. So, for all of us, as we're going to trust one another, we need to embrace and realize what distress we are bringing to the team, and so as I switch roles to the new class, I call them class 2025, Mayo, Owens and J.D., I try to play that competency role. Who can they call if they have questions? Who they trust will give them the right information? Not the information I want, but the information to make them successful. So, I think we've all got wear different hats in different roles, but it's about, I need all of us to be committed that we're going to try to trust one another.

Ms. Bourne said thank you very much for sharing that sir. Actually, I will use that to make this point here. This diagram, all it's simply showing is, we've talked about a lot of nuance. You guys experience this all the time, and it gets the visuals here on the right side of the slide, our numbers and relationships, and how the number of one-on-one interactions starts going up exponentially the more people are on a team or in a group. So, to the point of knowing each other, you can't possibly know all the context about each other at all times, and then especially when we start talking about Manager Jones and his team and the other people that you need to interact with, that's where it can start to feel impossible. So, going back to this, okay, we as a Council are a group who can keep progressing towards being a stronger and stronger team, how can we do that, and it's, if you think about, oh, am I one of the newer Council members who's one of these dots, and I want to understand who to better go to, that might be your focus on how you start to build trust in the role of the Council this year. For other members who have been here longer, it may be, oh, I need to show up to different meetings or give certain team members grace, or recognize maybe we see things very differently, and kind of take a new approach to just one or two relationships that have been over time, just we haven't gotten there with the trust that we need. So, that's really all we're trying to show with this visual, is that these details just keep layering on each other, and time keeps going, as we all know. So, it's easy to say, we disagree. We missed that opportunity to talk. I'm just not going to deal with it. We simply don't trust each other. That's where over time then it can just require more and more energy from all of you, but you're still not getting the outputs of that kind of one plus one equals three or four or more, that you really want.

Then simply, here's the point I made of like, then we talk about more and more of all the staff and their teams that you all have to interact with, there's trusting relationships and levels of trust there. So, that's where, when we say it gets overwhelming, just bring it back to the fundamentals. That's why we stayed so focused on the fundamentals, because the more adept you get at understanding these and recognizing them in every moment, it'll become kind of second nature for how do I want to change how I'm showing up to this meeting, or this might be a really hard conversation with someone who we don't have strong trust. So, I am going to take an extra week to have this come to prep for and ask them to prep for this conversation, because that's the one other thing I wanted. I spoke to one of the tables about it, when there is that active distrust, how do you kind of approach it? I'd say kind of two things, there's no, of course, magic solution, we all know that. It's making sure that you've done the reflection yourself on some of these concepts, but then that you've asked the other person to do that the same, and you're agreeing to come into that conversation together, sometimes with a third party if needed, but that you don't come in and kind of surprise them and say, well, we talked about it at the retreat, so ready, we're going to jump right in. It's that agreement to address it at a right time when you've both had that time to prepare. So, again, back to the point of like, I want this to spark conversation, but not in a way that could further deteriorate trust, because that actually helps you kind of get on level ground, and then build over time.

So, I will say, there are also concepts of, it's not always just one to one. There are tools that exist to help us build trust, things like rules of decorum. They might exist on a board of directors or a Council according to code or according to bylaws, but they also exist to kind of help accelerate trust. They can give you that kind of foundation of, we as a Council agree. For example, three examples I have here are that timeliness, we're going to be available and ready and kind of mentally present to show up and start our meetings on time. We're going to be prepared, have reviewed the materials, and be

ready with my comments and questions to ask those other team members, to learn from those other team members, or we've had the meetings ahead of time, sir, to your point, and then the respectful discussions. You guys have already touched on this, but that idea that we can disagree, but we're not necessarily going to debate in the more formal meetings, we will have had those disagreements and discussions ahead of time, and then think about how we're showing up as a Council. So, I wanted to just get your thoughts. We are pretty at time here, so I want to see if anyone has kind of reflections on this? This was intended to be more of a tabled conversation, but we've really touched on this already. The question is more about that perception of trustworthiness. How does something like simple rules of decorum that you all can agree to, kind of things like timeliness, preparedness, respectful discussions, relate over to these kind of competence, benevolence, reliability factors for trust? Any initial reactions or reflections on that?

Mr. Mitchell said so, Meghan, I'm going to start off with the tough one, then go back to the easy one. I think for this Council, the area we need to improve on is respectful discussion, and right now we don't have time allocated for that, and so then a lot of it's played out on the dais, when if we had a window or come early lunch, then if I'm mad at J.D., for example, my frustration will then occur at the dais as opposed to me and J.D. having 30 minutes to walk through where are differences are, and so J.D. doesn't think that I'm personally trying to attack him. So, I think that's big for us, that respectful discussion, and I think Councilmember Mayfield said it best, when do we have an opportunity to address it professionally one on one without the cameras being on us?

Let me go back to the easy one, the timeliness, and I will say when I did my one on one with all the Council members end of December 2025, that was the number one issue they had a problem with us, that we don't start on time. So, I'm going to be the first one to tell you I think six of us work, and so I do think sometimes it's a challenge for us, but I think the open communication, if you're going to be late, tell us you're going to be late. I think that's a giant step for us being on time, or communicating we're going to be late, help us become the high-performance team, because I will tell you how other people feel around that table, when they get there at 5:00 p.m., and some of us come in at 5:25 p.m., they go like, oh wow, is that the behavior we are accepting? So, we collectively could talk about how we're going to deal with timeliness, but I think more important for us, how do we have that window for a respectful discussion?

Ms. Bourne said yes, and that's where if we think back to that matrix, it was the spectrum at the top, and then all the lists of bullet points under the five kind of group dynamics. In some cases like timeliness, what I'm hearing is, okay, the strategy is communicate. We're going to just make sure we're all going to commit as members to be on time, but also when we can't be, because we do have other things that are kind of pulling us away from Council, we're going to communicate.

A tougher one might be the respectful discussions, because we agree that it's okay to disagree, but it requires time to have that disagreement in the way that allows us to have respectful discussions. So, if I think back again to that kind of big chart, there's that norm. Something that you guys might agree to is, it's kind of implicit that we don't debate and kind of show disrespect in these recorded meetings, but let's make it explicit. That doesn't mean it's not okay to disagree in the formal meetings. We can disagree, but what does that look like? Take it a level further and what does disagreement versus debate versus disrespect look like, so that you guys kind of know, here's what we agree to take offline ahead of time or after the fact, and here's how we can still disagree, but be respectful in these meetings. That's where you might want to make it explicit and not just assume we're all on the same page.

Ms. Campbell said and even if that happens in a meeting, we're all humans ya'll. We're going to mess up, we're going to have disagreements in the meeting, outside of the meeting and whatever. Maybe it's just stop and reflect, and just say, how did that land on you? How did you feel when I said that? Because I think it will check us when that person says, you disrespected me; I felt disrespected. It gives you an opportunity to reconcile. It gives you the opportunity to say, that was not my intent, here was my intent,

and here's why I got so passionate about that issue, and okay, I'm going to try to do better. If we just have that level of reciprocity in terms of, we're all humans ya'll, and again, our feelings get hurt, I don't care what our title is, and so it's just a matter of again the decorum of sometimes biblically, do unto others as you have them do unto you.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said I also think when we talk about respectful discussions, something I was telling my colleagues at this table and some other colleagues during my short time here is, disagreement on the work and not on our personalities or who we are as individuals, as beings. I think that oftentimes that line gets blurred. Just because I disagree on let's say a certain rezoning in someone else's district, does not mean I'm doing it out of a vendetta or because I don't like the person, or etc. The other thing is, I think when you have a disagreement with someone, allowing to Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell's point, that space to talk about that disagreement, and not doing loops or going to other colleagues and then having other colleagues come to you and call you that's there's a disagreement, because that does not help solidify trust. I think sometimes we might find ourselves in a situation where I don't know another colleague might be upset with me, but I do know, because other colleagues are telling me, that colleague is upset with me, and I think that's within the team, I think is allowing that space to air out your disagreement. I don't know, I grew up in a very strict household, and I say things very bluntly, and that's something I've been trying to work on, is telling my colleagues the tone of my voice does not by any way inform how I feel about you personally. I just had a Columbian immigrant mother who told me things how they were, so I think that's part of it as well.

Ms. Watlington said I so appreciate you for saying that, because my black momma will tell you real quick exactly how she felt, and my approach is very much direct in that way. I appreciate you adding things, because I'll be honest with you, when I think about rules of decorum, I felt myself feel a little bit of a way, and I had to unpack why, and I think it's because of some of things that you mentioned. I'm not going to say I don't care about these things, I do, but for me, none of these things build trust when I know that you're worried about what I wore three weeks ago, and you told everybody but me. I don't care what time you got to Council. So, sometimes I feel like we're dealing at this level, rather than really addressing in an honest and direct way what the issue is. So, for me, the rest of this ends up feeling like lipstick on a pig when it comes to trust. Absolutely, when it comes to performing your work, these are very important, but for me, I'm not looking at these to build trust.

Ms. Bourne said yes, so these alone don't work when there are distrustful relationships, and so, I guess two points. That's where we might add. So, as you've seen Debra's taken a lot of notes here. We're going to make sure we write these up for you, and you might take these and say, these are really generic and high level. We're going to take them a level more specific based on this discussion, and then also add things like, we're going to agree to try to address distrustful relationships in a constructive way. What does that look like might be a challenge or different in different situations, but that might be something you add just to say, there's going to be things that we do handle offline, and what does that look like as well. So, I do just want to note that we will make sure we get this all back to you with everything that you've already discussed, so that this can be that good jumping off point to kind of formalize a few simple rules of decorum that you all agree to. Anyone else have any other kind of final thoughts or questions?

**Councilmember Graham** said culture matters, and it's the centerpiece of all of this. I'll just let it lie right there.

Ms. Bourne said so, culture matters, and is that the culture of the team or the culture that individuals bring?

Mr. Graham said organization.

Ms. Bourne said of the organization. So, what dynamic does culture bring into all of this as well can't be ignored.

So, this is that list again, this is in your binder. There's the specific actions, but as far as boiling it down to, what is something that you can take away? This is not necessarily a to do list that you've got to do all of these things on the slide here or in your workbook. It is simply a prompt to help you think through, what's the one or two things from this discussion that were most insightful that I can start doing personally that will help us? I will show up as a Council member who tries to build trust, tries to help us advance towards teams. So, just kind of selecting one or two of these and really committing to those. Like Mayor Pro Tem mentioned, I'm happy to come back in a few months and keep engaging with you guys over time throughout this whole year. Debra, anything you would add to kind of share?

Ms. Campbell said no. I think if one thing comes out of this discussion, maybe that you might want to consider developing rules of decorum or rules of engagement or how you're going to collectively work together as a team. That's just one step, not how you're going to do it, but the what. I'm going to create rules of decorum. You all are still on a two-year election cycle, and that brings a whole other layer of intensity and stress, because you all were elected to get the job done, not be buddy partners, but you cannot get the job done effectively if you don't take the time to build this team. Then you become this efficient kind of entity that you don't regret. Man, that was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life was be on City Council. We don't want that, nor do we want other aspiring, people are watching ya'll. They're saying, is this something I want to do? This person I elected, look at how they're behaving, or they will say, I am so proud of that person that I cast a vote for. They may not have gotten all that I wanted, but their character and the manner in which they make decisions, I'm proud of. So, rules of decorum, I promise you, it won't take long to develop.

Ms. Bourne said okay, if no one has any other questions or any final comments for the group, I think we're at a good stopping point. Is there anything to cover right now?

Mr. Mitchell said Meghan, this is going to be an action strategy session, and so Debra, that needs to be assigned to a committee or assigned to someone. We're just not going to say we need to do it, we're going to make it an assignment. So, is that BGIR (Budget Governance and Intergovernmental Relations Committee), City Manager or Mayor?

**Mayor Lyles** said so, we want to do it in a way that it's helping someone or someone that wants to participate. I can't see all the way across the room. I see somebody saying no, but I think we can ask people to decide if they want to do it. You can just say, I want to do it and see how it works. We have some already in our process. Oh, we've got three already, so we've got three people. We've got Mazuera and we have Kimberly and who else, you James, okay, I forgot about you, okay, alright. So, we have a committee to do this. Who else was up? Oh, yes, back there, I can't see that far, okay. So, we have four. Let's take this seriously, and do it on a time and have a plan that this is something that the Council can come back as an organized effort and just think about what we've all learned today and see what we can do to make it happen, okay, thank you.

Ms. Bourne said thank you. I'll hand it back to you then, Debra, if we're going to go into strategies.

Ms. Campbell said the CIP (Capital Investment Plan)? I'm going to defer to staff. Are the people still here that need to do the presentation, the Capital? Okay, so, let's debrief. Let's kind of unpack. So, we're almost to lunch, and I've got this thing that I used to do with my staff in our executive team meetings after we have done something like this. We do a thumb-o-meter. Know what a thumb-o-meter is? You got it. So, you use your thumb as a meter. All the way down is, man, you're wasting my time; in the middle is eh; and then it's somewhere in between. How are we doing? How are you all feeling about the first almost three hours of your work? Thumb-o-meter, middle, eh, middle, middle, middle, anybody else? Anybody else? Middle, okay. Tell us, give us feedback, what could we do differently? What do you wish you had done that we didn't do for you, and we'll do it in the next 30 minutes? I'm just kidding.

Ms. Owens said I don't think that you can. I think my thumb would've been higher up earlier, and the weather precluded that. I think there's a lot of water under bridges already that are making some of these conversations particularly difficult to have in the moment, particularly on camera, and it's just there's an artificiality to it that is informed by a number of decisions that've already happened and a number of strained conversations that've already precluded this event. So, it's a tension, a palpable tension, that makes some of this deep, transparent and vulnerable conversation having, very difficult both to give and to receive.

Ms. Campbell said thank you so much. I really appreciate that honesty, because essentially you're saying possibly, as you said, the environment is constraining us from having that little deeper level of conversation that we need to have. So, I think it's note to staff some of these conversations need to be held in a different environment that you all can have a little bit more openness. Great.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said I think the presentation was great. I think it gave us a lot of tools and concepts to think about, so thank you so much for that. The reason I put middle, because I think there's more work to be done. If I would have put thumbs up, I think we would've been really great as a Council and we all trust each other and get along so happily together, which it's the goal. I think we're working towards it, but to Councilmember Owens' point, there's a lot of work to be done, there's more conversations to be had, and there's more rebuilding to happen, but I think that's just the nature of a local government structure, especially one that is elected every two years, you're going to have to keep building trust with new or existing Council members in the work that we're doing.

Ms. Campbell said absolutely, thank you so much.

Ms. Mayo said yes, I was just going to kind of recap some of that, but also thinking through like how we process the work. I know Malcolm says that a lot, but I taught math for a long time, so things to me are just not as succinct as I would like or the processes, so then it makes it more challenging. I have to talk to everybody about something. If we could just figure out ways to make things easier, and I'll talk to the Manager about that on my next one-on-one, but it's just a lot of information, and I get that's the process of the game, but how can we create procedures that make it easier, or even like, we'll have our committee meeting on Thursday, and we'll get the agenda, but I don't know exactly what they're going to talk about, because I don't see all the details, but we all have Outlook, Microsoft Outlook. They could share those presentations with us beforehand and still be editing them. So, little things like that, I mean, I would love to go into the committee meetings and have read all of that stuff before. I mean, agendas are very broad. So, I think that's part of it, for me. Then I could talk more to my colleagues before the day of, literally right there at the dais, or at our committee meetings.

Ms. Campbell said okay, so are you telling me that you all don't have a deadline for receiving information prior to your committee meetings? You do or you don't?

Mr. Mitchell said so, when the committee chairs met back in December 2025, we did ask our DCMs (Deputy City Managers) to send out all committee presentations the Thursday prior to the meeting, because usually in the past we have a tendency to just show up, and to me it wasn't making our committee meetings productive, and so the DCMs have been doing a great job of getting us the information in advance.

Ms. Campbell said so, let me ask the City Manager. So, is it two days, three days, is it 72 hours, is it?

**Marcus Jones, City Manager** said it is the Friday before.

Ms. Mayfield said Friday. So, the weekend, just like we get the package Thursday night.

Ms. Campbell said so, are we talking about the Council meeting, not committees? Surely, you don't have all committee meetings on Mondays. You do? Holy cow. I am so sorry staff. Oh, that's a lot ya'll, that is a lot.

Mr. Mitchell said and I thank the DCMs for sending it out in advance.

Ms. Mayfield said we've had some changes since you've been gone.

Mayor Lyles said we've had these changes where Council members actually came into the building. We actually, Debra, you'd love to see the place where every Council member has a window now that they can look out at the City. So, I think that one of the things that happened is that we stopped really bringing everybody in to talk about what was going to be going on and what was going to happen. So, I think sometimes doing new upholstery doesn't really work that well. I think that it would be something that you could just see more people in the space, more of the Council members in the space on the time that this would work, and then they would have time with the staff as well as any other conversations that we needed, but we have to say that we're going to show up now. I understand people have jobs, and I understand people have things to do, but sometimes we made this effort and it works best when you work together and it's pretty much what we're trying to do, is expressing what we're trying to do now, how do we maintain those relationships if there is seldom anything except at the dais?

Ms. Campbell said so, if a meeting is on a Monday, then that means information goes out on a Friday, that gives you a weekend to network, and the meeting's on Monday, that's not enough time for you on a weekend, right?

Ms. Mayo said not necessarily, sometimes. I think it depends. So, I just looked at the Housing Committee one. We have all the presentations this time, but that doesn't always happen. Sometimes it's just the agenda. So, sometimes it's just that consistency. As a teacher, I'm used to having a checklist, so I'll be like, okay, do I have, and maybe that would help for some of the DCMs to have that part to be like, oh, did I not just include the agenda, did I also include the slides, so that people can look at them so that they can have their questions beforehand. I mean, it's just not always consistent, some committees do, some committees don't, some meetings there are, some meetings there aren't. I mean, we could do an audit, and we could figure that out very easily.

Ms. Campbell said this is definitely an action item for the staff to work on.

Ms. Owens said so, I was just going to piggyback off what Joi was saying. With respect to things coming in on the Friday and that ability to have conversations, I don't value perhaps in the same way that others may, that that weekend outreach from somebody that feels quite honestly intrusive of my family time, but more than that, I don't appreciate all the nuances of the conversation, the way that I would in a face-to-face. I'm a very literal person, and so context and facial expression and all of that, I'm not as trusting of an over-the-phone conversation as I am of a one-on-one, and I know already the relationships that I've managed to have on Council in the three months that I've been there are really with the people who have shown up more, because I know that that is how I develop rapport. So, maybe we do revisit the timing so that we do have an ability to talk before we're on the dais, because I don't always answer my phone on weekends, and I don't necessarily give full trust to someone who's calling me on a weekend and is very certain of their point of view. That is off-putting to me, and I would rather have an open conversation with two or three people, hey, how do you feel, and less certainty and more curiosity, and that just doesn't get communicated over the phone.

Ms. Campbell said and I know that this sounds like a lot of work, Council, for you all to be able to literally take people on an individual basis. It's just like your kids, you can't raise them all the same way at the same time, because they're unique individuals, and you all are unique and your interaction has to be more unique. You may not be able to address Mr. Driggs in the same way that you do Ms. Mayfield, but what I am hearing

from each and every one of you is that you want to make the effort of making this Council be, you know, Charlotte's on the move. You all get to determine where and how it moves, because you're making some really, really key decisions, and the best thing you can do is work together to come up with the collective good. Alright, we've had two people who have not talked hardly any.

**Andrea Leslie-Fite, City Attorney** said I'm new G in contrast to OG. Thank you for the presentation. It's been really helpful truly as the new G, to listen and hear my new bosses talk about the work and how to support them in this work. I've been taking a lot of notes about communication styles and preferences, because while I have the opportunity to speak with them one-on-one monthly, it is helpful to hopefully be able to share the information that best supports their work, because ultimately I recognize they serve the people, the residents of Charlotte, and so this has been really rich for me. I haven't said a lot, because I've been taking it in, and it's always a great opportunity to do that.

Ms. Campbell said and I hope that you all will give me the liberty to defer a little bit to some of the staff, because you're a team, and some of this I think they need to understand obviously the perspective that you all have, but sometimes it's kind of good to hear from their perspective as well, because again you've got to work together.

Ms. Anderson said I just want to make an observation that I've been experiencing over the last couple years, which is I think this Council, especially now with our three new members, we sort of have three different phases of this Council. So, we have a group of Council who have been long serving, and I'll call that the legacy section, and they talk about doing things the way it used to be back in 19, and that's not a slight, but it's real, we all have heard this. So, it's like this legacy way of doing things is the right way, almost like a boomer perspective. I'm not calling you out in particular, but I think we can all say that we've heard it. It's on public record. It's in our meetings. It's been said. It's not a slight, it's just an observation. Then, we have a portion of this Council that, just through my observation, sort of came on during COVID, and a lot of things were done remotely, and everything had to be suspended for COVID, and so the ways of working and standard operation procedures flipped, and I think that was their introduction, and therefore, a baseline of how things work. Then, I'll say the third piece is sort of the post-COVID portion of this Council, myself included, and we have three brand new Council members who just came on last year, and their experiences as you've heard, because they've been vocal this morning, are very different about their ways of working and desired SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). So, I think there needs to be a calibration. I'm not saying one or all three are wrong or right. I'm not assigning a level of correctness to it. I'm just making an observation that there probably should be a calibration given that we have three aspects of Council around ways of working and standard operating procedures.

Mr. Graham said and maybe I should've expanded when you gave me the opportunity, because all of this centers, even the comments that Councilmember Anderson just made, around culture. If the culture was firm, it doesn't matter if you've been here a year or 40 years, there is a process in place that everyone understands, that everyone respects, that everyone knows and can rely on. The facilitation of the meetings, rules of engagement, show up on time, speaking limits, read the material before you come, respect your neighbor, and we could do that very quickly here. How we facilitate the meetings, and now in some cases who facilitates the meeting, that's the structure and the culture, and how we disseminate information internally and externally to whom, when, and why. Those things go beyond the COVID babies, true point, that's when we lost everything for sure, because we simply stopped meeting for months, and that culture of Council members coming together on the floor before the meeting, in the small hallways, negotiating among one another went away, just like all the employees in the building went away. So, the building literally on Fridays is empty, I'm there, no one's there, Then, it's how we disclose the information. If we focus on the culture and the governance, that helps rebuild the trust, because they can trust the process. So, that's where I think we are, and that's why I kind of declined not kind of taking that to a

committee, because I think we can figure that out today, four, five, six bullets, because we've talked about it before.

Ms. Campbell said alrighty then.

Ms. Watlington said I agree with Malcolm. I think essentially if you think of the Galbraith Star with Org Design, there's certain elements, there's structure, but then there's also the people. I'm going to talk about Mayor Pro Tem, yes, I'm going to talk about you. I came in 2019, three months later COVID started. Guess who has been on my phone almost every day for the last six years, James Smuggie Mitchell. It didn't matter it was COVID, we were in each other's face, whatever, whatever, he builds relationships. So, I think that that is the core of it. We can however we want to develop a process, etc., etc., but I think as we were listening earlier, it was profound to hear how you Councilmember Owens and how Councilmember Driggs differ in your approach. I'll say your approach resonates much more deeply with how I approach things, and people are different, and so I think that until we figure out how to deal with each other and our differences, all of the other things are small potatoes, if you will, necessary, but I think that that is the foundational piece and we need to figure out how do we work with each other from where we are. So, I'm particularly interested in hearing what Councilmember Ajmera has to say since she hasn't spoken today.

**Councilmember Ajmera** said well, I think we all need to do more listening than talking. If you look at the Council meetings, people just are waiting to make their points, and I think if you all just do more listening, I think we can operate more effectively, and I agree with Malcolm, we have a cultural problem, and that's not going to be solved here in this room in front of the media. I think that is having one-on-one conversations with Council members. I think Kimberly nailed it earlier when she talked about water is under the bridge. I couldn't agree more there. So, that's all I have to say.

Ms. Bourne said and we can make sure that everything that you guys have talked about today, because it sounds like you're all committed to like, let's lean into the relationship piece of this. There is a process piece of this, and you as the current Council are deciding we have three kind of historical eras or phases that make up who we are, but that's like now we get to formalize it. Today, we get to kind of choose and formalize going forward who we are as a Council, and I can make sure that we take the notes from this session to give you guys kind of the jumping off point for that.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said yes, I agree with all the points that have been made, and I also think about the structures and processes in place right now, how we operate as a Council also need to be revisited. As I've told Manager Jones multiple times, we're a city that is seeing 157-plus folks move into our region each day, so we can no longer operate as, and this is my personal opinion, part-time Council trying to fulfill the requests and demands of nearly a million residents that live in the City of Charlotte. To Mayor Pro Tem Mitchell's point, six of us or more are working part-time or full-time jobs. So, we need, not only processes changes within how we communicate and engage with the Manager and City staff, but also processes changes in how we operate as a Council, whether that means we have more support from our Office of Constituent Services, whether become full-time Council members to allow us to actually be in the work. Because I'm hearing all of these demands and all of these requests, which are great, but if we are at a limited capacity as Council members to fulfill these requests and demands, whether it's working groups, whether it's creating a special committee to talk about decorum, etc., we need to rethink how this Council is structured in terms of like our time capacity, as well as our engagement with City staff.

Ms. Campbell said perfect, okay, if you will indulge me. Yes, Mr. City Manager.

Mr. Jones said okay, so thanks Debra, this has been great. I love you and you know that, okay. So, a couple of words came out today, like grace, but another word came out, curious, and I think part of it is the curiosity of understanding people and how to work with people. My list was benevolence, competence, reliability, and I think for me it is what we're trying to do is something special for about a million people, and if we start

with that. So, we went through this exercise, Meghan, you crushed it, thank you, two years ago, but we were doing something totally different. So, as Council starts to think about policy and we start to execute the policy, what we decided over an 18-month period, 9,000 employees, is to be committed to exceptional service every day. So, it doesn't matter whether you are working with Solid Waste or fire or police, it's every single employee is committed to exceptional service every day. It's our north star, and my big take away is I enjoy working with you, and maybe it's, what is this collective north star, because even Meghan early on you said, sometimes people wonder what the good is. So, this is the tenth one for me, and the beginning as staff knows is always a little bit challenging. With that said, I think we've made more progress than any other Annual Strategy Meeting up to this point, and I'll end with this. So, Deputies, I think we can just be committed we'll get these presentations out on Wednesday, so you're not getting them on Friday. Chairs, I just need for you guys to work with us a little bit sooner, so we can get the agenda and the presentations. So, not the agendas out on Wednesdays, but the agendas and the presentations, so that we're not taking away your weekends. So, things like that, it's the takeaway for us, and I just really appreciate having the conversation as we are committed to exceptional service every day.

Ms. Campbell said absolutely. Great, okay. Now we're standing between you and lunch. I knew that would get your attention, Mayor Pro Tem. Alrighty, so we're going to break. We'll come back at 12:30 p.m., I believe, and we'll start on the next session, yes sir. Very well done, very well done. Alrighty, we'll see you all back at 12:30 p.m.

The meeting was recessed at 11:53 a.m. and reconvened at 12:31 p.m.

Ms. Campbell said we've got a long day today. As you all know, there's a discussion around I-77, so we will be leaving here around 4:00 p.m. ish or so and starting that discussion at 6:00 p.m. Okay, I think we've got a quorum, so we're going to start, yep. Alright, as we were saying, we've got a long day. We're going to reconvene at the Government Center at 6:00 p.m. and continue the discussion. Now, we're going to move to a very, very important discussion related to law enforcement and policing and public safety and so forth. If you think about public safety from the perspective of it being just innate, everyone wants to feel safe, and the role of local government is how then, through the services that are delivered, that you support and enhance a community's sense of safety. I think Shawn Heath is going to provide us with a panel discussion regarding this issue, and so now I'm going to turn it over to Shawn.

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### **ITEM NO. 3: BUILDING A SAFE CITY: ALTERNATIVE AND NON-LAW ENFORCEMENT APPROACHES**

**Shawn Heath, Assistant City Manager** said thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. Shawn Heath, City Manager's Office. If I could ask the panel to come up, because my presentation is fairly short, and as you're coming up, I can introduce you. So, we have the dream team from Housing and Neighborhood Services, Director Hefner, Deputy Director Stewart. We rely on Housing and Neighborhood Services a lot, and sometimes I refer to this team as our community first responders. So, we're thankful for the work that they do, and they're going to breathe some life into some of that this afternoon. We also have a few folks from CMPD (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department), Sergeant Phillips, if you can join us up here, and Andreana Lucas serves as a Senior Behavioral Health Specialist. So, one of the things we'll be talking about is alternative strategies to public safety.

So, you know I like a short presentation, so I have six slides. I will move through the content very quickly, then we'll move into a fast-paced panel discussion, and then we'll turn it back to you for reflection and discussion. So, first slide here, we've intentionally structured the agenda today where we have first a conversation around non-law enforcement and alternative strategies, followed by Chief Patterson to provide some perspective. I know I'm preaching to the choir on this, but public safety obviously requires a mix of strategies, a wholistic approach. So, we won't have time to go into

everything in great detail today, but we want to wet your appetite on some of the exciting things that are happening, because you've enabled them to happen.

So, even though this presentation is not about policing and law enforcement, this is where we did want to start just to state the obvious as you think about the key components of public safety. CMPD is clearly the cornerstone, and it's evident when you're in the community that having patrol people in cars and on bicycles and walking the beat is the demonstration in the most tangible way of City Council's commitment to public safety, those things matter to real public safety, as well as to perceptions around public safety. This Council clearly has shown a tremendous level of support for first responders and CMPD in recent years. It was obvious in your Budget Workshop conversation Monday of last week that public safety and public safety investments continue to be front of mind for you. So, even though this is not a law enforcement presentation that we're doing here today, just wanted to start and acknowledge the importance really with policing at the core.

Moving on. Now CMPD, of course, is just one component of the criminal justice system, and in any city, particularly any large city, you're only as strong as your weakest link in the criminal justice system. So, CMPD must be supportive and complemented with a strong District Attorney Office, strong courts, the jails of course. One of the things that's helpful to reflect on here is your most recently adopted legislative agenda, which makes direct reference to the importance of having adequate resources in the DA's (District Attorney) Office and in the courts, and with the courts that would refer to clerks and magistrates and judges. For any community that expects to achieve timely justice and accountability, all of these component pieces in the criminal justice system must be adequately resourced. So, once again, this is an area where Council is in fact leaning in. As I had mentioned in a previous conversation, now that you're state legislative agenda has been adopted, we at the staff level will turn our attention towards activation, and the Charlotte Regional Business Alliance has offered to serve as a convener to bring parties together, including the City, to be thoughtful even in a short session, how can we work with partners in order to breathe life into the things that you've adopted.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention local ordinances and state statute. This is another area where Council's been very active over the last few years, if we think about intentional choices, policy choices that this Council made related to some quality-of-life ordinances a couple years ago and reestablishing the criminal enforcement penalty, current conversations at the committee level related to street vending, and then once again, your recently adopted state legislative agenda, which makes direct reference to opportunities to strengthen local ordinances and state statutes as well.

So, we're zooming out a bit more here, once again, stating the obvious, but in order for this community to continue to deliver on your public safety outcomes, there must be strong partnerships across other public sector agencies, the private sector, and the nonprofit community, kind of going around the wheel here, think about all of the things that Mecklenburg County does in the Health and Human Services and Criminal Justice Services space. Nonprofits were blessed in this community to have tremendously strong nonprofits that are focused on economic stability, education, housing, really all of your priorities. There are great nonprofits doing important work. CMS, of course, is vital, and you don't think of early childhood literacy and graduation rates as public safety strategies, but we know that those things matter to public safety in this community five years, 10 years down the road. Then the private sector, of course, instrumental to the economic stability aspect of the social determinates of health, and also very influential in terms of their philanthropy. The good news here is that, once again, thanks to Council actions, you've enabled staff to advance a number of collaborative efforts across the public and private sector. You can go down the list of affordable housing and homelessness, youth enrichment, behavioral health, food security, workforce development. Those are all examples where you are allowing us to lean into things with our partners like the County and others.

Moving on here. We continue to zoom out here and, once again, just reiterating that if you go across the wheel in green here, your priorities, your policy choices, the

investments that you've authorized, thinking of Corridors of Opportunity, economic development, housing, small business, workforce development, all of those have unquestionably had a positive impact on community safety.

Last one, key takeaways. I'm stealing the line from a Council member here, you know who you are, public safety is a team sport, we can't do it alone, we know that. Integrated efforts across the ecosystem are essential, which to me is separate and distinct from the first one, it's not enough for it to be a team sport, but we all need to be operating from the same playbook where possible. Third, I think there are a number of actions that Council has advanced in the last few years that demonstrate a true understanding that in order to address public safety issues in the community there must be investments in prevention measures, a recognition that social determinates of health do in fact have a direct impact on public safety. As I said before, your Council priorities that on their surface for the community may not seem like public safety strategies, are in fact of direct relevance to public safety in this community. Then, the last one here, which may not be as obvious, but it's a little bit of a segue into the panel discussion. It's kind of an emerging feeling at the staff level that there are opportunities kind of further extending what you've enabled in the Corridors of Opportunity to look at small geographies. These would be small geographies where there are known challenges related to public safety, unemployment, disorder. How can we harness the resources of the community, not just the City of Charlotte, but working with the County, other nonprofit partners, in order to achieve beneficial outcomes in these areas across a whole range of focus areas? So, we'll delve into that a little bit more here in the panel discussion.

So, that was really the extent of the presentation. Really in a lot of ways just wanted to underscore/highlight all of the great things that Council has continued to do, and also point at a few specific homework assignments that we have, for example, activating on your legislative agenda, and then continuing to really lean into some of the specific things we'll discuss here in the panel discussion. So, with that, let's jump into the panel. I've already introduced the panelists, and we're going to kind of go through a series of topics here in rapid fire, and then as I said we want to leave ample opportunity for any questions that you may have and reflection. So, first we're going to start with Director Hefner and the unhoused population. So, Rebecca, questions for you. We know Charlotte-Mecklenburg unhoused residents experience significant health and safety challenges, and the conditions of homelessness pose a range of quality-of-life challenges for our City. What are the key strategies we are advancing to address these challenges? How does this work connect with public safety? Who are our key partners in these endeavors?

**Rebecca Hefner, HNS Director** said sure, thank you, Shawn, and good afternoon, Mayor and Council. Glad to be here with you at your Strategy Session today. So, I don't know if ya'll remember the old Johnny Cash song about the one on the left is in the middle? Okay, I'm not getting any recognition, alright, so, no, okay, it's on one of my dad's old records, let's just say. So, I'm going to answer the first question first and the third question second, that's where I was going, okay. So, you all actually have a lot of the key strategies that address the unhoused population. Even though it's not the kind of front focus of your work, I would say there are three key things that you all do with your investments as City Council that support connecting unhoused residents to housing and also to the services that they need to maintain that housing. So, the first strategy is a funding and investment strategy. So, you have several funding sources that you leverage for supporting the unhoused population each year. You have federal funds, financial partners, and of course, your Housing Trust Fund. So, with your federal funds, these are dollars that HUD (Housing and Urban Development) actually designates specifically for a variety of homelessness services, but you invest in both organizations that support the unhoused population that creates shelter, that conduct street outreach, and that also pay for rental subsidies. So, there's a variety of funding that you invest in supporting our unhoused neighbors. Through the Housing Trust Fund in your most recent \$100 million bond, on affordable housing funding policy, you invested an allocation goal of \$9 million in supportive housing and shelter services, and under that funding you have already invested in one really critical shelter for our community, which is the non-congregate shelter that you invested in in partnership with

Mecklenburg County, and that is a gap that we have here in Charlotte, is having a non-congregate shelter. This building when it's rehabbed and opened will be very supportive in filling that gap. As you know, we also have a general capacity gap when it comes to shelter, so each investment in shelter and supportive housing is really critical right now.

Another strategy you have, and you might not think about this every day, is addressing encampments, and so this is a partnership that happens between CMPD and code enforcement and often includes Mecklenburg County and always includes our street outreach partners. So, addressing homeless encampments is not just about cleaning them up, it's actually about connecting with the residents who are living in those encampments, helping get them connected to services, get the supports that they need to get connected into our system, find shelter or temporary housing as needed, and then the last step is actually then cleaning up the site itself.

Then, the last strategy I would say really, street outreach. So, the direct interactions that our partners, like Hearts for the Invisible and Roof Above, have with residents who are living on the streets to help understand what their needs are, coordinate those needs, because they're often very complex, and then connect them to resources. So, those are really your key strategies of investment and addressing encampments and working individually, but it takes again a whole range of partners and coordinated partnerships. So, I will just start with CMPD, because you're going to hear about kind of the crisis intervention and crisis response work, but what you might not see and hear about every day is every police officer on patrol, who is actually out in our neighborhoods with visible presence with care and partnership and accountability. So, they're really thinking people first and helping connect our unhoused residents to all of those supportive services that are available, and then Mecklenburg County. Of course, the County, it is under their Health and Human Services, a priority to support getting people housed. They have recently announced that they'll be advancing the A Home For All work, making homelessness rare, brief and non-occurring, and I think we can all get behind that goal, but a range of partners, from United Way to Roof Above, the Salvation Army, Friendship CDC (Community Development Corporation), Hearts for the Invisible. I know it's dangerous when you start calling out partners, because I've missed a lot of them, but tune in on Thursday, we're talking about partnerships in the Housing Committee, but I would say starting with Mecklenburg County and CMPD, and then just a range of community partnerships.

Then, the last piece is just thinking through the connection to public safety, and a lot of this is about two things, I think. In our code enforcement work and Housing and Neighborhood Services, what I emphasize every day is safe, healthy, clean, and green. This is the community we're trying to build, the community that we're working with code enforcement to create, one that is safe, healthy, clean, and green. Just to start with, when people are living on the streets, they are not safe and they are not healthy as individuals, but they can also, because of the conditions of homelessness, create spaces that are not clean, and so we have to be mindful of that. We have to create that for public health and for individuals. Then, just the thinking about the perception of safety. When there are people living on the streets, and especially when you have the coexistence, which we see a lot of mental health challenges or substance use, those are situations that not everyone knows how to deal with when they encounter. So, that can create a feeling of a lack of safety for residents, even if there's not a direct danger. So, because it's not something that we all know how to manage when we encounter, it really can be a perceived sense of not feeling safe. So, I think those are the pieces where the work that you all do to invest in connecting people to services and to housing really does support the overall sense and perception of feeling safe in our community.

Mr. Heath said thank you very much, Rebecca. So, you had a reference to a song, right. So, I'll do a reference to a movie.

Ms. Hefner said be careful, because my fell so flat.

Mr. Heath said sometimes those are the best ones. My reference might be a little easier. So, My Cousin Vinny. Maybe one of the most famous lines in My Cousin Vinny,

“two yutes,” okay, that kind of fell flat. So, Office of Youth Opportunity is still relatively new for the City of Charlotte. Dr. Stewart, give us a sense for, what is the Office of Youth Opportunity? What is your vision for this work? How does it connect with public safety? Who are some of our key partners?

**Dr. Raquishela Stewart, Deputy Director HNS** said well, I just want to say, I didn't quite get my song together yet, but if I had to think of one, I would think of, “If U Stay Ready,” you don't have to get ready. So, first I do want to say thanks for the opportunity to be here, and I want to give a thank you to the Manager and to Council, because when the Manager presented in budget last year that he wanted to set up an Office of Opportunity, he had 100 percent support. I didn't know where he was going with it, but once Rebecca and I got into the work, I really understood and saw the need. So, when we think about the Office of Youth Opportunities, and we think about the vision, it's really simple, we want to prepare the youth of today for the opportunities tomorrow, and we have to think about how do we do that. So, when the office was put together, there were three primary function areas that were put together from various departments across the City. So, one was Youth Diversion from CMPD, there was Peer Mediation and Peer Clubs from community relations, and then there was the MYEP (Mayor's Youth Employment Program), which was housed under myself and Rebecca in Housing and Neighborhood Services.

So, when we think about creating opportunities, what we really had to do was take a look at what we've been doing for the past 40 years. Shameless plug, this is our 40<sup>th</sup> year of MYEP. So, we had to take a look at, what are we doing and what do we need to do differently? So, some of the things that we are doing is we are reevaluating and reimagining our programming. We're trying to create under our three pillars, career experiences, youth development, and youth safety. So, our legacy program had been the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, traditional six-week program. We offer development one time a year. When we think about the state of our youth today and what we need to do differently, we are meeting the youth where they are with the resources that they need, and we're looking at it from a wholistic approach. So, when I think about the work that we're doing, as I mentioned, MYEP was traditionally a six-week program. Once we get out into the schools and we're talking with the youth and we're talking with the CDC's, and now we have youth diversion under our umbrella, and we're working these youths and their families, we needed to make changes. So, our internships are two, four and six-week, because you want to think about, there are some youths who may have to attend summer school. There are some youth who may have not been accepted, because they had summer vacations, but we know with the, I don't want to use the word crisis, but I've already said it, the crisis of where our youth are today, that we need to make intentional changes, so that we can make sure that we're getting the impact that we need. We needed to also look at the experiences that we're offering and not look at what's hot today? What's cute today? What's needed tomorrow? What's going to make them successful? So, for example, we've had some great conversations with the Office of Sustainability, so that we can create a pathway to prepare our youth for those roles. We've had great conversations with the Office in Workforce Development, and Danielle and I work very closely so that we can make sure that the work that she's doing with the training, and the work that we're doing with the youth, that it aligns, so that we can ensure our youth are successful. Shawn, you asked quite a few questions in one sentence.

Mr. Heath said yes, did you comment on partners?

Dr. Stewart said I did not.

Mr. Heath said okay.

Dr. Stewart said so, we have lots of partners, so like Rebecca, I'm not going to name names, because I don't want to leave anyone out, but our primary partners are CMS. CMS gives us access to every school. We have an opportunity to go in and to provide career readiness training, and what we did differently this year is we actually went in and helped to fill out MYEP applications. We went into 23 schools, and we have

currently been in the INLIVIAN properties, so we're going to where they are. We're checking off the box of excuses, and we're going to help our youth to be successful.

Another great partner has been Mecklenburg County. We work very closely with the Office of Violence Prevention, as you all may be aware, we jointly rolled out the Alternative to Violence in 2021, so we continue to work closely, and thank you to the Manager and his relationship with Manager Bryant. Councilmember Mayfield, I remember last year in committee you mentioned that when you were younger, after school there were parks and there were opportunities with parks. So, I've had four meetings with the Park and Rec Director in the past two weeks, and there's some great things coming. I can't share yet, but there's some park activation that's going to happen for our youth across the City, so that they can have things to do after school and the summer.

Then, of course, our own fabulous CMPD is one of our great partners, especially since we now have youth diversion in our wheelhouse, so we work very closely with Major Tillis and his group, the Community Engagement Group. We've been working closely with the School Resource Officers, not only within the City, but also across the towns, so that we can make sure that we can offer our programming. The great thing is now we are able to see things from a different lens, so we're able to see that we're impacting the family holistically, and that's one of the great things about the Office of Youth Opportunities being in Housing and Neighborhood Services, because we have the housing department, we have code enforcement, we have 311 that has all of the resources, so we're able to intentionally impact the youth with our partners.

Mr. Heath said thank you, Dr. Stewart. If I could just connect two dots real quickly as we transition to the next mini-topic here, once again tying this back to why is this a public safety conversation? It's because if you think about the unhoused population, members of our community that have a lot of unhoused individuals will say to us, this is a public safety challenge, a quality-of-life challenge, but I think what's important here once again is Council has given us the tools as staff to advance solutions in an intentional way. These are human-centered solutions for the unhoused population. This is not an arrest first, criminalize homelessness strategy. This is not a let's displace these individuals from the community. It's a street outreach strategy. It's a non-congregate shelter strategy, and everything in between, intentional investments. On the youth side, how does that connect to public safety? As we've said many times before and shared with you, when you look at the data, the data is compelling. Juveniles have a disproportionate impact on crime in the City of Charlotte. So, once again, what are the things that we can do upstream from a prevention standpoint, youth enrichment and opportunities for workforce development at an early age? They're countless examples of things that you've approved in recent budgets that enable us to do just those very things.

Okay, so the Chief has given me permission to pull in CMPD representation into the non-law enforcement, so this is exciting. This is an alternative strategy. So, Sergeant Phillips, if we can start with you. Just at a fundamental level, what is the Crisis Intervention Team, and the Community Policing Crisis Response Team?

**Sergeant Nathan Phillips, CMPD** said yes, sir, thank you, and thank you to City Council for having us out here today, and it is my honor to be here sitting on this panel today to discuss about CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) and CPCRT (Community Policing Crisis Response Team) as something that's very near and dear to my heart. So, for those who don't know, CIT began in 1988 after the fatal Memphis shooting of a man who was dealing with a mental health crisis. So, they began the program Crisis Intervention Team to train officers to be able to recognize individuals who are experiencing a mental health crisis, and also how to deescalate. So, in 2008, CIT joined CMPD where they began to train our officers, again, how to recognize an individual who is experiencing a mental health crisis.

Okay, that program is a 40-hour block where the officers are trained and they are also there to learn about different resources that the County has to offer to not only the

consumers, but their families as well. During that 40-hour block, the officers have the opportunity to actually hear stories from individuals with lived in experiences to know how they felt when they themselves were involved with police officers while they were going through their own crisis. Again, it reminds the officers to know that patience is something that CIT teaches us, something that we cannot wear on our toolbelts, but something that we wear in our minds and our hearts, because again, patience goes a long way whenever you are out with someone who is experiencing a mental health crisis. The Mecklenburg County CIT Program is actually one of seven that's platinum certified, not only in the Country, but in the world, and that is because of the utilizations that not only CMPD utilizes with CIT, but also our dispatchers. Our dispatchers go through a three-day training where they themselves are able to recognize when someone is calling 911 and that person is in crisis, they don't have wait for patrol to go out, they will summon a CIT officer to be en route, on scene, because again, it is important to note that each and every call, we have to again have what's called patience.

Now, CPCRT, that stands for Community Policing Crisis Response Team. In 2019, CMPD recognized that responding to mental health crisis calls for service, we needed to go a step further. So, what did they do? They created a co-responder unit, which consisted of six social workers who are trained in, again, being out with individuals with a mental health crisis, and they were partnered with six CIT trained officers. Their job is to respond to all active crisis calls for service during that time to provide additional resources, again, not to only the consumers, but for their families. Because of City Council, and again we thank you for always believing in us, today in 2026 that team has grown from six to now 12, making us one of the largest co-responder units on the southeast coast, not only the largest co-responder unit, but the co-responder unit who actually goes out to every active crisis calls for service. So, that team operates from 7:00 a.m. until midnight every single day, and even after midnight, we have on-call units who are able to come in to assist patrol with getting involuntary commitment orders if need be. One of the biggest things about CPCRT is followups, because patrol will go out initially, but the followup is the key, and the followup reason is to make sure that the families and the consumers are on track with what they need and if we need to provide them with more. Again, followup, followup, followup, that is the key to keeping the team and keeping that individual in line, and to also let them know that we are here if you ever need us.

Mr. Heath said thank you, Sergeant, for your passion, appreciate it. So, Andreana, if you don't mind, if you can give us a sense of the 12 teams. As I understand it, that's 12 teams of two, we have a sworn officer paired up with a behavioral health specialist. Can you give us a sense for, what is a day in the life like for these teams when they're dispatched, what do they encounter, what do they bring to those situations, etc.?

**Andreana Lucas, CMPD Senior Behavioral Health Specialist** said absolutely. Good afternoon, thank you for having me. So, as Sergeant Phillips mentioned, it is 12 teams, that is a state-licensed mental health clinician paired with a CIT trained officer. Our shifts run from 7:00 a.m. to midnight. We do have callback for your more high-risk type situations, and then if there's a situation where either there's not a team available or it is after hours, patrol is able to create a referral. So, that referral is something that the team is going to receive, and they will be able to follow up with that individual and their family and provide services. So, at the beginning of shift, officer and clinician are going to meet up. We do operate on what's called an embedded model. Co-response looks different across the United States, and so you do have some situations where the team is more of like a followup. Our team gears more towards the immediate crisis being addressed, and another element of the embedded model is that our officers and clinicians, they ride together 40 hours a week. So, through that time they're able to really develop a nice dance, rhythm and a pattern. They're really able to kind of work through these situations together as a partnership.

Now, again as I mentioned, the team will meet at the beginning of their shift, get into the car together and they will immediately start to monitor the radio. They are looking for calls that may be appropriate for CPCRT, and then if they do find a call, they will then

add themselves to the call. That is one way we dispatch the calls. The majority of the time, our dispatchers are just through the 911 operating system. Someone has made a call for service, patrol has responded out to scene, and they have identified a need for CPCRT, and so patrol will call through that way. We do also have the community members that will call. They may have had some experience where they've heard about us, and they will request us directly through 911. So, when the team reaches the location, they're going to speak with patrol briefly, maybe family, friends, whoever is on scene just to get a little bit of background information about what's going on, and then they are going to immediately provide deescalation services. So, they are going to speak with this person, figure out how can we get this person down to, if not their baseline, a little bit better emotionally than they were before we got there.

Resource connection is another big key thing for us. We're going to complete a clinical assessment. So, we're going to want to know any mental health diagnosis, any medication. We're going to want to know, of course, what brought the crisis about, what is the situation that happened. We're also going to want to know about social supports, because we definitely want to be able to tie in any supports that can help that person along getting to treatment. We want to try to create a treatment plan with the individual and their families, and sometimes that looks like you are going to have sister come stay with you for a while, or you are going to call your therapist. You are going to go get your medication refilled, and if there's a situation where we are not able to get that person back to their baseline, and there's potentially a safety concern, we are able to go petition for that IVC (Involuntary Commitment) order. We're also able to educate the family members for any future clues that an IVC process may be necessary. So, in addition to that, we want to make sure we just leave the individual and their family member with a couple of resource options, and in some situations we do have where the individual may need to go to the hospital. So, the team is going to facilitate that transition. So, they are going to transport the individual to the hospital, and they're going to provide what I call a warm handoff, meaning the clinician is going to speak with the nurse staff, that way that individual does not have to recant what they just told us while we were getting that clinical assessment, and that way we are also able to kind of provide some of our clinical observations to the nursing staff. We do offer follow-up services where we are going to reach out to that individual. If they were admitted to the hospital, we try to follow up with hospital, and then we will also try to follow up with family as well.

I think education for the family is very important in these situations, because oftentimes they do experience burnout, and we really want to be able to validate what their experience has been with their loved one. Also, it's time for them to vent as well, because oftentimes the focus is on that loved one. So, just giving them an opportunity to kind of get out what's been going on, and before we leave them, we want to leave them with some tools, some words to use to engage with this individual, so they can be more productive in actually getting that person to treatment.

Types of calls we go on would be grief calls, we have situational crisis, we have threats of suicide or homicidal ideation, and then we do sometimes get like your behavioral health adolescent type calls, and I believe that's the extent of our call type.

Mr. Heath said thank you, Andreana, appreciate it. So, I did have one more question in my hip pocket, but I know the feedback you provided was, you want to have to time to talk and ask questions, so I'm going to keep that one in the hip pocket, but I will say if anybody's interested in hearing about the specific work we're doing in the area of Catherine Simmons Avenue, Lincoln Heights in particular, super collaborative work across the City organization, Mecklenburg County, Atrium, Friendship CDC, the list goes on and on, Rebecca Hefner would be able to answer that question today or at any time in the future. So, with that, I'll turn it back over.

**Debra Campbell, Facilitator** said okay, now it's up to you all. Any specific questions, interests, things you want to know about?

**Councilmember Ajmera** said thank you. Great discussion. I appreciate the insight all of you have shared, it's certainly very helpful. Thanks to Dr. Stewart for leading our youth office, and certainly this is a collaborative effort, and the City cannot do it alone. We need nonprofit partners, housing advocates, and just our County colleagues and faith organizations. A couple of questions for Sergeant, and remind me?

Mr. Heath said Andreana Lucas.

Ms. Ajmera said Andreana, Ms. Lucas. You talked about the crisis response model. Certainly, I learned a lot. Obviously, we knew about the crisis response, but we didn't have insight into how it works, the 40 hours training and so on. Currently, it operates until midnight. So, what happens if there are calls that are very distressed situations? I know that you get referral in the morning, but the time is lost, and I know your boss is right here, but you can tell whether is it, for the Council, worth expanding that to be 24/7 service?

Sergeant Phillips said thank you for that question. Absolutely, we would love to have teams operating 24/7. Currently, right now, again, we always go out to patrol just to let them know that if you are out with someone who is experiencing a crisis after hours, to always send those cases to us, so that in the very immediate mornings, we can have a team followup with the families, and if not the families, the hospitals as well, and we do have a close connection with Mecklenburg County intake facility. So, if someone is arrested, we can contact their behavioral health specialist at the intake facility to have that individual analyzed to see if an IVC needs to be granted, and if not, again following up.

Ms. Ajmera said so, what I hear from this expert is that we need to expand that model to 24/7. I would like to see data as to how many calls we get that are in crisis. I'm talking about mental health crisis, where we need an expert from your team that is after hours, after midnight. Mr. Manager, if we can get that data from CMPD that would help us as we plan our budget session, whether this is something we should expand, and if we do, where does that land in terms of priority, because certainly the team is doing great work and certainly connecting individuals. I think in these scenarios when we have crisis calls, time is so important, time is crucial, like every single second. So, if someone is having to wait to get a call from experts in the morning, did we lose that very important time where we could have saved more lives?

Sergeant Phillips said well, if you would like the numbers from 2025, I do have them.

Ms. Ajmera said oh, sure.

Sergeant Phillips said okay.

Ms. Lucas said sorry to interrupt. I would also like to add that the department does have a callback system that the team will just operate on that schedule, but it is more for your higher risk type situations.

Ms. Ajmera said so, Sergeant, do you want to share the numbers?

Sergeant Phillips said oh, absolutely. So, in 2025, I have it right here, a total of CIT and CPCRT calls for service was 5,541 for the year 2025.

Ms. Ajmera said and do we know out of 5,541 calls, were there any calls after hours, or was that something being tracked?

Sergeant Phillips said so, that we don't have at this time, but we are more than welcome to get you those numbers at a later date.

Ms. Ajmera said absolutely, and I think it would be helpful with other municipalities, do they have 24/7 model, or is it only until midnight? I think that will help us with comparison. Obviously, there are competing priorities when it comes to funding, and we

want to address retention and recruitment, that is definitely one of our top priorities, but I also want to make sure that if we are getting crisis calls after hours, that we have the resources that we need. That's all I have, thank you.

Sergeant Phillips said yes, ma'am, thank you.

**Councilmember Graham** said Rebecca, Shawn teed it up when he talked about Catherine Simmons and Beatties Ford Road as a pilot program that we've been working on for months. Just this past weekend we had a street outreach event where we literally interacted with 67 individuals. Councilmember Anderson was out there as well, and part of the strategy, I think, is to scale it to other parts of the City, like Reagan Drive, Milton Road in the Plaza. These are two points of interest, because the County's interested in those points as well, so it keeps the collaboration together. Can you talk to me a little bit about the internal stamp working of it, not the issue on the ground, I get that. How's that collaboration internally? How's the collaboration from a budget perspective, time allotment? Do we need more resources to do more? So, talk to us a little bit about how internally that's working, and how the relationship with the County is geared up for expansion?

Ms. Hefner said sure, thank you, and I will just say thank you for coming out on Friday, and Councilmember Anderson, we really had a great event out there. The collaboration that it takes to work like this in an area like Catherine Simmons, Lincoln Heights, was on full display. So, if you have a chance to see anything about how that event played out, I encourage you to take a look. So, the innerworkings, one thing that I will say is that we were able to really lean in the way we have in the Catherine Simmons area this year right now, because both the City and the County were able to reprioritize and reallocate existing resources. So, that's always going to be our first line of defense, how do we use what we already have to pivot towards the work that we think will be most impactful?

As you mentioned, we have several areas that we are currently working in. We call this approach, neighbors building neighborhoods, because we feel like we need to get the on the ground partners, the neighborhood organizations, the community-based organizations aligned and active before we can really expand and scale. So, the situation we had in Catherine Simmons, for example, we had been working out there actually for about a year in a really focused way with CMPD, code enforcement, our neighborhood engagement liaisons, and then what happened is the community started meeting monthly, they pulled together a taskforce, and that engagement from the community. It was Friendship CDC, it was the business partners right there along Beatties Ford, and people like the Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Organization. When the community really started engaging, one, it put pressure on us all to move faster, and two, we were able to really leverage that full range of collaboration. So, that's what accelerated it. From a staffing and resource perspective, we were able to in an area like Catherine Simmons, leverage our neighborhood engagement liaisons, they typically lead the work in this area, because it's within a Corridors of Opportunity. We also have a large number of staff from Corridors who are doing work on the ground. The Corridor's team led the Wellness Without Walls event, and then with CMPD and code enforcement and others. So, can we get to all the areas we want to get to with existing resources? I would say it depends on how quickly you want us to get there, and so with what we have and with the County's investment of a little over a half a million dollars in unsheltered response resources, that's what enabled us to accelerate right here right now, and we're constrained in how quickly we can move, is how I would say.

Mr. Graham said well, I would love to continue this conversation as we kind of get into the budget. I only can speak for me. I think we need to accelerate it, because there are other parts of the City, all connected to the Corridors of Opportunities, are experiencing the same issues. Different street names, same type of issues, and some are bigger than others, Councilmember Anderson, Reagan Drive, the geography is just larger, so it's going to take more collaboration, more resources, and I just want to make sure that we have the appropriate funding in place and the staff in place, because I see this as a marathon, not a sprint.

Ms. Campbell said perfect.

**Councilmember Driggs** said Ms. Lucas, I was very interested in your comments. The problem I think about mental illness, these are very difficult patients, and they're not always willing patients, and our system doesn't serve them well. A long time ago when I was involved with mental health in my professional capacity, lengths of stay at mental hospitals were 24 or 25 days, they're now about four or five. So, people get stabilized, they get prescriptions, and they get tossed back out again. Recently, in the context of Iryna and Decarlos Brown, there was a public debate, why wasn't that guy locked up? I talked to the City Attorney who said it's very hard to get an involuntary commitment. If you go to court, that person has rights and they will resist, often. So, I guess I want to get a little deeper into the practicalities, especially from a safety standpoint. How do you know, among a lot of people who are very disturbed and could be dangerous, which ones you really need to focus on, and then how hard is it to get them put in a safe place and to protect the community?

Ms. Lucas said thank you for that question. So, I would like to start off with, while 911 has been called, police might've responded to the scene, the clinical interaction of that piece is voluntary, unless there is an observation that that person presents as a danger to themselves or others. When I say the clinical piece is voluntary, it is that the clinician is going to attempt to complete a clinical assessment to go down the list of stressors, hospitalization history, assess for any suicidal, homicidal ideation, any current treatment plan, or any even just desire for treatment. So, in that situation or in that case, you could say it could be considered difficult if we do have a particular consumer, we call them consumers, some people say patient, some people say client. You have a particular consumer who is resistant to that piece. Once again, the team is going to do their very best to still assess for safety in those situations, what is being said? What does this person believe is happening in the world around them? Of course, we're going to draw on family, friends to see who has been around this individual lately to see if we can possibly at least come up with a safety plan among their social supports.

Mr. Driggs said so, I think in general I would just comment, the most dangerous people are likely to be the least cooperative, and that in my mind is the public safety challenge. Thank you.

Sergeant Phillips said and I want to piggyback off that as well, if you don't mind. So, we go above and beyond to make sure that we do everything possible on scene to get that person to the hospital. Obviously, our team will go to the hospital with that subject to speak to the nursing staff and the doctor staff to let them know what they observed on scene to kind of help that team at the hospital to provide that subject with all necessary resources. Now, what happens after we leave, as we know is out of our control, but again, we do everything on our end to make sure that that does happen.

Mr. Driggs said thank you.

Ms. Lucas said I'll make one more comment as well. I served as a clinician on the team before I became the supervisor, and I will say oftentimes we would have issues with maybe engaging and connecting, building rapport with someone. It is oftentimes during our followup period that that individual has had a moment to sit, think about it, maybe some of their stressors are no longer around, and so they are able to make better decisions. So, oftentimes we do see some success when we are making our followups with that individual and their family. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell said okay, I've got this table almost, and then we'll go to the next one.

**Councilmember Anderson** said thank you all for being here and for providing really great information. I'm a huge proponent of addressing public safety from a full ecosystem approach, and not just purely leaning on law enforcement, so I love this panel, Mr. Heath, and I love how you've put it together. A couple questions for you. Dr. Stewart, I had an opportunity to go out and visit one of your ATV (Alternatives to Violence) programs, one of three, out on Exit 4, and it's a fantastic program. They have

incredible relationships with the community, and I'm really happy to hear that you are already activating and collaborating with the County, because one of the biggest concerns and root causes I heard while I was out there, was that the kids don't have anywhere to go. They don't have anything to do or hang out, and so effectively, they're just hanging out in the shops, these longstanding small businesses that've been there for decades, and they're trying to basically execute programs for the youth and keep them off the streets. So, an activation of public parks for youth activities sounds like a wonderful idea, and I hope we can see that sooner rather than later.

I also wonder what else do you need, and I have your excellent memo that you sent out on February 19, 2026, sort of laying out everything, and I've highlighted some things in yellow that I think are really important, but what else do you think needs to be added to this approach to the ragu of addressing youth enrichment?

Ms. Lucas said thank you so much for the question. So, I had a similar question asked of me with the Board of County Commissioners, and what I mentioned is, I think what's most important is that we need to get educated. Because when we think about it, we're just a small piece of the puzzle, and as Shawn mentioned, there are lots of nonprofits across the City that doing work as well. So, to understand where the gaps are, we need to understand what everyone is doing and what that looks like. So, myself and the Interim Health Director, Dr. Scott, we have committed to create a convening of all those who are doing intervention and prevention work, so that we can kind of create like a resource hub for each other, so that we can truly be able to go to our leaders and say, Mr. Jones, Mr. Bryant, we have done this collaboration, we've identified the players in the game, and this is where the gap is. So, I don't want to just throw out something to you. I want to be very transparent. We need to do an analysis of what we currently have to make sure that we're leveraging the other partners across the City.

Ms. Hefner said and could I add to that? So, I want to just shout out, because some of this work is already happening, and what that is is a better alignment between the City and the County and the school system around how we support our youth. So, we had an opportunity to sit with the Manager, and Manager Bryant, and the CMS Superintendant, and talk about what are some of the things that we need collectively going forward? So, there's a short-term ask that you're going to hear soon, but I'm going to go ahead and preview it for you right now, which is a collective call to action to support our youth this summer, this summer, 2026, and if you think about the summer, the summer starts now. People have already filled up summer camps. We have almost 1,200 applications in for our summer employment programs.

Ms. Lucas said and how many jobs do we have, Rebecca?

Ms. Hefner said and right now we have lined up 200 jobs. So, what we need from each and every one of you, the County Board, the CMS School Board, your entire networks, your families, everybody you know who owns a business. We need employers to come to the table this summer, so we can connect our youth to summer employment opportunities. Safe places to be, career experiences that they can leverage, income for themselves and their families. This summer is going to be big. Our City Manager, you know well, likes to set bold goals. So, we had a meeting a couple of weeks ago and he said, we want to see the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Mayor's Youth Employment Program, we want 1,000 career experiences, and I thought, okay, well, we need to end this meeting, because we have some serious work to do. I think there are a lot of things we can do to align those resources going forward, the work that Danielle is doing in workforce development, aligning CMS's career pathways. There's so much opportunity, but the opportunity to create an impact is right here in front of us right now. If we can help our youth who applied to this program from every school across CMS, from Title 1 schools, from the schools in our Corridors of Opportunity, if we can connect every single one of them to a career experience this summer, I think we will have set the foundation for significant transformation in this community.

Ms. Lucas said and let me just add to what Rebecca has mentioned. If there's someone that has a bleeding heart that wants to provide the experience and not sure what that

should look like, we have a team of 14. We will come out. We will help write job descriptions, and remember, I said internships can be two, four or six weeks, so there are options, but like Rebecca said, we do need everyone's help.

**Mayor Lyles** said I wanted to just say thank you. I recall last summer we had the new Park and Rec guy from the County, and we went through this procedure. To think about it and to hear that it has come to fruition is just wonderful. The opportunities that you're presenting, I'm just amazed. Let me just say this, since Marcus said, how many?

Ms. Hefner said 1,000.

Mayor Lyles said 1,000. So, let's see, how many 1,000 nights would you be when we're going to have night basketball, here we go. We're going to put him on the basketball court, and he's going to get out there and do this for the rest of the summer.

**Marcus Jones, City Manager** said so, Jason, can you make sure you call Mike Byant's comms person and Dr. Hill's comms person, and let them know the cat's out of the bag, but this is intentional, and I'm sure they won't mind. So, when we sat down and we met, you don't wait until May to talk about opportunities for the summer, and so what's important is we're going to attempt to co-brand all this. Whenever we send something out, let's make sure we have the symbol from the City, from the County, CMS, and there's some things that we can do together to make sure that folks understand the opportunities.

Mayor Lyles said yes, they're going to have a short guy to play in that basketball.

Mr. Graham said don't forget about The Alliance, the centerpiece of the corporate community, should be front and center.

Ms. Anderson said I absolutely love to hear that. Clearly, you've excited the whole room with that, that's fantastic, and that's going to change lives for sure, that one experience could really pivot a young person's life, but I have two more questions, sorry, the room just got excited about that. For Ms. Hefner, my question to you is, I think a part of our public safety charge should be addressing directly these areas in the City that effectively have an acceptable culture of disorder. Congratulations to Mr. Graham for the program going on Catherine Simmons, and I want to definitely see that scale and multiple, but there's so many other pockets. Milton Road is absolutely one with The Plaza. There's others out Freedom Drive. So, thinking about how we can address this culture of disorder, and break it, because it's not going to take one time. You're going to have to shatter it multiple times in order for it to dissolve. So, I'd just love for you to think about, and you probably already have, but share with us in the future how we can approach that, outside of Corridors, because it is a pressing issue.

Then, my last question is for the Sergeant. Last week we had Leader Batch and Leader Reives from the General Assembly come and talk to us about various topics, but public safety was one of them. We had some questions and discourse around mental health, and how we can be creative about funding mental health challenges given the pivot from the history of funding it here in our state with Medicaid. I'm thinking, as you all were talking through your program, which is fantastic, that maybe as a part of our federal legislative agenda, that that might be one area that we could capture some dollars for mental health specifically, is through this combination of law enforcement and social workers. Yes, it's a really interesting approach. Can you tell us how does your program interface or overlap with the CARES (Community Assistance Response and Engagement Support) Team program that we started years ago, but now resides on the County side?

Sergeant Phillips said that's correct. Thank you for that question. So, our teams do work hand in hand. For those who don't know, the CARES Unit was created to respond to the unhoused population here in the Charlotte area. When they began, they only touched Central Division and Metro Division, but as of right now, as you know, they now touch four different divisions and will continue to expand. Again, their mission is to provide

housing for the unhoused, but if they were to get out with someone who was unhoused who was also suffering any crisis, they can contact our team and we work together to not only provide with housing, but making sure that their mental health is stable.

Ms. Anderson said gotcha, thank you for that.

Ms. Campbell said okay.

**Councilmember Owens** said again, I want to echo the compliments that have been given for the quality of this presentation. I really do appreciate the wisdom and the insights. I will say that I had a very interesting conversation with a physician, a voter, in my district, who had seen that I had done the point in time count, and he wanted to have some conversations about what that experience had meant to me, because he'd done it years prior. One of things that really stuck with me from that conversation was his assessment, and I'm interested in the point of view of ya'll up on the dais, his assessment that a lot of folks have a perception that everyone who's homeless is mentally ill and that that is not true, and that we need to get our minds around that. Also that homelessness itself, sleep deprivation and the stress on the body and the inability to perhaps manage medication on a consistent basis and food on a consistent basis, all can lead to things that can appear in a short term as a mental health crisis, and really I was persuaded by his point of view, but his estimation was that we don't always approach it that way, and that looking for more non-congregate shelter is in his estimation that Housing First model that you can't really get to some of the mental health issues until you can get somebody who's able to sleep in a bed, until you can get somebody who's going to be not focused on whether they're going to be warm that night, and get somebody who's going to have food in their belly, that all those things are much more easily managed, so I'll leave that there. His other comment that really struck me was a lot of the focus after Iryna Zarutka's murder on involuntary commitment, and his experience being that that is not an effective strategy, because for a lot of folks they've lost trust by the time you've had them involuntarily committed. Whatever you're coming at them with is not ultimately going to be as effective, and that you do need time to get somebody onboard, so that you're not going with that process. So, I guess my takeaway is those two thoughts, but also reiterating social workers and attorneys, like medical case management, all of these components that we need and that we need funding to be able to supply. My hat is off to all of you for understanding those, but if you could elaborate on any of that that would be interesting to me?

Ms. Hefner said I'd like to start if I may just to say, the fundamental challenge is not the mental health, or whatever else may be going on for our people living outside. The fundamental challenge is a lack of affordable housing, because under that Housing First model, which is decades of research that says that's the way to go, if you can get a person stably housed, then they have the space, the time, the capacity, the lower stress levels, to then address whatever other challenges they may have occurring. So, the need for non-congregate shelter and other shelter resources that people can access in crisis, and the need for more affordable housing, which you already invest significantly in, these are the things that stabilize households, stabilize families, and give them an opportunity to engage in all of the other great resources that are made available. I just want to shout at Andreana and her team, the other thing that we see from the different ways that we support housing is that the burnout for our case managers and our clinicians and our mental health professionals is significant, and that without those navigation and support resources even getting folks connected to housing is very difficult, so thank you, but also I want to acknowledge that that is another big gap in the system.

Ms. Campbell said alright, the next table.

**Councilmember Mayfield** said thank you all for the presentation and providing the information. Rebecca, you know I think Housing and Neighborhood Services team is amazing, and you all have been doing amazing work. Manager Jones, I want to thank you for the willingness and the openness that you have exhibited with our County Manager, and the fact that you all have had very different conversations that are in

alignment with conversations that my colleagues and I have had with you over the years. Now, you say you want 1,000 MYEP experiences. While we're having this budget conversation, one of the opportunities I believe we have is, as an elected official, a number of us, and I'm going to speak for me personally, I have always had individuals reach out for internships. Now, we have changed where you need to be a minimum of 14, but that is an opportunity as well, because we have young people that are interested in local government, and I've had the opportunity where the young people I brought in through internship have also been able to shadow in the Attorney's Office, shadow in the different departments, because I identify their goals and aspirations, but if Council had the ability, we're not a strong [inaudible] form of government. Some Councils actually have their own budgets for their areas or an Office of Constituency Services, so they have the ability to do that, but that may be an additional way for us to be intentional with the 1,000 that you would like to see.

For our law enforcement, the question that I am wondering, and this is based off of an instance that happened earlier this year that was concerning, when you identify the opportunity to go out and the individual has been identified as needing to be a part of CPCRT or with the CIT, are you also running to see if there are any active restraining orders for those individuals? The reason I ask that is earlier this year I had an elder who was beyond 80, unfortunately her son was experiencing a number of different concerns, but that relationship almost turned into stalking/abuse. There was a restraining order that was issued through the courts. It took a long time, and I have a whole timeline, and I shared it with the Manager for him to share it with our law enforcement leadership, for one, CMPD to show up, two, I never heard if CPCRT or CIT showed up. So, I want to get a better understanding how your work, as you see it, is also connecting to protect our residents, specifically our elders?

Sergeant Phillips said yes, ma'am. So, again, that is one of the reasons why when someone calls 911, we encourage patrol to go out first, because patrol's job is to make sure that, not only is it safe for our team, but that if any criminal aspects have occurred, that we are definitely still going to take criminal actions, as well as provide mental health services too. The one thing that we do offer that we partner with the County, is called Wellness Court. So, if an individual who is suffering a crisis commits a crime, we will still charge that individual with that crime, but we also will submit that person into Wellness Court, and there's a whole program where they receive an ACT (Assertive Community Treatment) team to help that person, again, stabilize their mental health, but in that case patrol goes out, and they are supposed to make sure that we run each individual into our database to make sure that we don't have any pending criminal charges for us to take action on.

Ms. Mayfield said and this, Manager Jones, and for Chief Patterson, now that she's here, I think it will be helpful for Council to receive an update on the 911 dispatch calls in that time period, because you remember this incident, that was 45-plus minutes to even have someone go out. That much time, a lot could have happened. So, while we're identifying that numbers are being reduced in a number of cases, at the end of the day safety is about how we feel. So, the perception of safety, regardless of what the numbers say, is about how we feel, and if we feel like we don't have a system that responds quickly. I just had an individual, two Sundays ago, unfortunately had a major accident off of the highway with a motorcyclist. This individual actually unfortunately watched, because they were in traffic when the accident happened. So, they saw the individual fly. They saw the motorcycle go a different way, 911 went into leaving a voicemail. When they got in contact with someone, it was many minutes later, but the line of questioning was not one that was helpful considering the immediacy.

So, while we're supporting and funding these programs, which are great programs, I want to ensure that we're also tracking the family or the communal impact of it, and part of that communal impact is how quickly we can get through to you. If there's a delay, if you're going into voicemail, if there's a challenge when you're calling 911, even though we've had that challenge for a while, because we didn't have enough staff, there has been an increase in opportunity, I think it will be helpful for us to get an update of where we are on that as far as vacancies. Because again, you say you want 1,000 MYEP

experiences. Those 17, 18-year-olds that are in school, that might be a good plug in, because there very well may be someone that is interested and being that, because now we have 911 and all these different shows on TV. I mean think about it, A Different World encouraged a lot of young black people to go to college for the experience and for what they saw. Well, these shows like 911 and others are giving just a commercialized version of what 911 looks like, but it's also encouraging young people to consider this field they hadn't. That might be a way to get to your 1,000, so that we don't run our staff crazy with trying to figure out, there might be some natural connections and opportunities that we just hadn't considered that we might want to consider.

Sergeant Phillips said and that is one of our Chief's main focus, retention and recruitment, so that we can cut down those numbers.

Ms. Mayfield said thank you.

Ms. Campbell said so, we are approaching the time for you all to take a break, but I am willing and I'm sure they would be willing to continue the conversation if you all want to cut into your break time.

**Councilmember Mazuera Arias** said I'll make it quick. Thank you so much for being here. Councilmember Mayfield's right, Scandal made me think I was going to be the next Olivia Pope, and this is why I'm here. Again, thank you for time, appreciate the expertise. I want to first talk about young people and internships, and I agree, Manager Jones, with Councilmember Mayfield, I think our OCS, Office of Constituent Services, will be a great opportunity for this, because as social media evolves, I am out there on social media and I'm getting messages from students across middle schools and high schools throughout CMS that want to shadow me or an internship, and be part of the process. I think this is also a great opportunity to spread education and awareness about how a [inaudible] form of government works, and that we can't solve all the problems like New York City can. I do have a question for our CMPD. How does the JADE (Juvenile Accountability and Diversion Empowerment) initiative incorporate to making sure we are keeping young people off the streets, off of criminal activities, and how can the City support to continue scaling the JADE initiative?

Sergeant Phillips said thank you for that question. So, with the JADE program, we actually have specialists who can answer that question better than we can, and we definitely are not overlooking that question, but if you will give me your contact information, I'll be able to answer that question thoroughly for you.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said perfect, thank you, and I'm also thinking how we can use that as well to provide career opportunities to folks that are part of the JADE initiative, going from that prevention to then absolutely getting them through a pipeline of career workforce development.

I wanted to pivot really quick about the economic impact for small businesses when it comes to homelessness and vagrancy. I'm not for criminalization, absolutely not. I'm an advocate for mental health, so I recognize that a lot of the help and resources we need also are dependent on the willingness of our state lawmakers to give us those resources, so I want to make that very clear, and I want to thank the BGIR Committee for putting that on our state legislative agenda. I want to know, when does a certain point get to being too much when we have folks disrupting businesses, exposing themselves to business owners. That really has an economic impact to certain sectors. So, I want to get some ideas on like the mitigation processes to ensure that these repeat offenders aren't continually disrupting the economic impact of small businesses?

Sergeant Phillips said so, again, it comes down to our CARES team. They were put in place for situations like that, because when we go out as patrol, we have only a minimum amount of resources that we know of, but with CARES, they actually are embedded with the resources in the County, because their main goal, again, is to get that subject off of the street into a home to be stabilized, that way we don't continue to

have those repeat offenders who are disrupting businesses costing them money, but in all, we're all working together as a team. As they say, it takes a village, correct, and that's what we all are sitting on this panel right now, a village.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said I appreciate that. I also want to recognize that sometimes other sectors of the City might have more resources and more partnerships than other sectors might have. Other villages might be built a little bit more stronger. For example, we're having recurrences in District Five on Eastway Drive, Central Avenue, Sharon Amity, where we keep getting these repeat offenders, and I oftentimes don't see the CARES team out there. So, Manager Jones, it might be a question of how do we better scale that. I would also love to see some datapoints of where our CARES team, our officers are reporting these incidents, because the last thing I want is inequity and where these incidents are being reported from. So, right now, Uptown Charlotte is a destination. Well, we want to make sure that East Charlotte also becomes a destination and deserves the same visibility and attention to these incidents than other parts of the City. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell said okay, we've got one more question, and then we'll get to City Manager Jones.

Ms. Ajmera said it's more a comment. So, to wrap it up, based on all the insights that you share, housing stability is number one. If you truly want to build city, we have to have stable housing for everyone who lives in our city who works in our city. Councilmember Owens talked about Housing First approach. I remember when I served on the Housing Authority Board, now it's called INLIVIAN. They first partnered with nonprofits on the Housing First model, and we actually had the founder of the Housing First travel here from New York and talked about how housing can provide stability in one's life, so they can access other services, whether that's mental health support, healthcare needs, or whatever else that's needed. So, I just want to make sure as we end this conversation on building a safe city, alternative to non-law enforcement approaches, we are prioritizing affordable housing, especially \$100 million in affordable housing bond referendum, so that we can build on the progress that's been made since past 10 years. Thank you all.

Ms. Campbell said thank you.

Mr. Jones said so just a couple things that I think are important. One, you guys were really, really good to push the budget discussion out of today, so I wasn't able to put any kind of guardrails around, so you guys are brilliant, but seriously, I think Dr. Watlington will love this, it's almost what's the RACI matrix. Who's responsible? Who's accountable? Who's consulted? Who's informed? We have all this momentum with the County and CMS, which is great. We're working together on youth, mental health, housing, workforce development, economic development, quality of life. With that said, I think it's important for us to figure out who's the lead, who's the partner, who's the support, so that we're not falling all over ourselves, and I don't know how to begin that at the elected level. We've started it at the staff level, but I don't want to lose this momentum, because I think if we can figure out at a bare minimum who leads, who partners, who supports, and we bring in The Alliance, as Councilmember Graham said, to bring in the private sector funds, as well as the philanthropic funds, I think we're on to something.

Ms. Campbell said just a quick question. Is there a Continuum of Care Board here?

Ms. Hefner said yes.

Ms. Campbell said alright, any last minute things on this topic? Otherwise, we'll start the next session at 10 after, and hopefully we can get that done, because it probably won't take us an hour to get to the Government Center.

The meeting was recessed at 1:56 p.m. and reconvened at 2:10 p.m.

Ms. Campbell said okay, we're going to continue our conversation around Building A Safe City, and we have the pleasure of having your Chief of Police, who is going to be here to provide us with a brief presentation. I think she's going to also invite staff up to answer questions if you have any, and just as a reflection, I can't tell you how impressed I was with that earlier conversation around Building A Safe City. It is just so important that, and I think one of the Council members used the term, a holistic approach to community safety. I believe the Chief is going to talk about all those things that we intuitively don't think, add to the community's sense of safety. Sidewalks, streetlights, all of those things contribute to and support the community's sense of safety. So, without any further ado, I'm going to turn it over to your Chief of Police.

**Chief Estella Patterson, CMPD** said thank you, Ms. Campbell, and good afternoon, Mayor, Council, and Manager Jones. Thank you for the opportunity to come and present, and not only me, but also our team coming forward. Let me begin by just saying that it is great to back at CMPD, and that's largely because I inherited a fantastic team of individuals, true professionals, and people who are devoted and dedicated to the work. Also too, I love being back at CMPD, because this is an organization that's very data driven. We just don't do things just because we want to do it, we really rely on the data. We're also very community focused and we are relentlessly, always trying to look at excellence, doing things the right way, and so I'm very pleased with that.

Over the past two months in this seat, almost three months now, I've been really listening to our personnel, our officers, professional staff, as well as our community, to see what is important. So, even before I officially arrived in this seat, once my name was announced, I started talking about priorities, just from what I was seeing across Charlotte, and then I met with the team, I met with community members, business members, and what they shared with me really aligns with the three areas that I have been focusing on, or that we will be focusing on as an organization. I have shared this repeatedly, but I will just tell you that the three areas are, reducing violent crime and disorder of course, enhancing our community engagement, building that out more, and then just improving employee morale and wellness. That is just so huge for us. I will say that these are not just slogans. These are not just taglines for the moment. These are actual operational efficiencies that we want to expand and work on, so that we can support our City. As Charlotte is growing, as it is evolving, it is important that our strategies evolve as well, and I think these three areas are really where we need to focus.

So, I'll start with, on January 5, 2026, we officially rolled out our end of year numbers, our 2025 numbers and our annual report, and we have a copy on each table so that you can take a look at that. In this report, I was very pleased. I can't take credit for any of it, even though I want to. Chief Jennings did an outstanding job and so did the team in making sure that we were laser focusing on crime and reducing that. I'm pleased to announce that we saw significant reductions, and I say significant, because to have reductions in violent crime as well as property crime, is really significant. You don't see that too much. I haven't seen it in my 30 years that much, and so being able to achieve that, especially in a city that's growing at this pace, really speaks volume of the team and what they're doing. As you can see, overall crime down nine percent over 2024, 21 percent in violent crime, and then six percent in our property crime.

Now, looking at 2026, because this is not the way I look at 2026. I see that it's a year of momentum, that we have a good tailwind behind us, and we're moving forward and we're going to continue to move forward. In 2026, year to date, we see good crime reductions as well. We're currently sitting at an overall 15 percent reduction in crime, 15 percent in property crime, and then 10 percent in violent crime, which is really good, by just looking across our numbers. We did see a little bit of an uptick, and our homicides were up one over last year, but still overall we're seeing those reductions, and we're going to continue to keep working as much as we can to mitigate crime, and that's what I want to talk to you about today.

So, looking at violent crime reduction, we're going to continue as a police department to really expand our data-driven policing policies, strengthen our collaborations, and

making investments in technology. Debra, you talked about some different things to do. Technology is going to be one of those things that we really lean on when we talk about crime reduction. In 2025, the team did an outstanding job of really looking at where we were seeing upticks in violent crime and making sure that we were formulating units that were strategically looking at reducing that. One of those units is our EDU, or our Entertainment District Unit. That Unit was very much, and continues to be, focused on our Uptown area, our Center City. It is a proactive Unit that works and is looking mostly at our nightlife, being out in the area and educating our businesses, our nightclubs, and such, that they're abiding by ABC (Alcoholic Beverage Control) laws, but also too, we know that when those nightclubs let out at 2:00 a.m. in the morning, if there's any kind of disagreements or issues, those individuals are going to the parking lots, they're getting their firearms, and then we're going to have a bad incident, and so trying to mitigate that as much as possible and interrupt it as much as possible is important to us.

Also too, our JADE unit, and Councilmember Arias, you talked about that earlier, you were asking a question about JADE. If you're not familiar, JADE is our Juvenile Accountability Diversion Empowerment unit. That is another unit that has focused primarily in our Uptown area when we have our youth that are idle, that are out and about. This unit is making contact with them, and it's not a one and done, it's not one contact, you take them home, or if there's an enforcement action that needs to be taken, that you only have that one interaction. This team is very good about doing follow-up. Going to court with these individuals, talking with the families, interacting, making sure they're going to school, and keeping them out of the pipeline of getting in trouble and having negative outcomes. So, we're very pleased with what JADE is doing, and we've got the best of the best on JADE. When I saw the members of the team on there I said, I know a lot of those people, because I hired them when I was here before, and I know the quality of their work. So, they're doing an outstanding job with our young people.

Then, you know about Operation Safe Season. I've talked about that pretty extensively, the work that we did with that. Coming in the door, it was important to me that we are not operating a silo as a police department. I really lean heavily on all our partners, making sure that everything that we do is a multi-agency approach, looking at local, state, federal, and even private security, to make sure that we're all working together towards the same goal. So, we kicked off Operation Safe Season in December 2025. We had two operations and we saw some significant outcomes as a result of it. Over 400 traffic stops, 400 and something citations were issued, we made 54 arrests and we took 34 dangerous firearms off of our streets. That was very significant, and I know that everybody thought, okay, Operation Safe Season is done. No, we're continuing with Operation Queen City Safe, where we've already had two of those operations for the year, the first one where we focused on the W.T. Harris, Mallard Creek, North Tryon Corridors, again, getting dangerous individuals off the streets, but also making sure that we're educating the public on the right things to do and the wrong things to do. This past weekend, we had our second session or our second operation, which was also a success. We focused on Arrowood Road, Nations Ford, and the West Park Drive area, so we were in southwest Charlotte. In fact, one of our Lieutenants in this room was able to get a dangerous firearm off the streets, because she was out there working this operation along with her Deputy Chief, Deputy Chief Bryley. So, it's all hands on deck approach that we are using to reduce violent crime.

Aside from just the enforcement aspect, it's important that we invest in technology, as I stated before. One of the ways that we're working to mitigate crime is through our Connect Charlotte platform. Raise your hand if you've heard of Connect Charlotte, a few hands in the room, very good. We're thankful to Council for supporting this effort, this platform that we have. It is a tool where we partner with our community with this, particularly our business community. So, we want to have access to those cameras, the outside cameras, not the inside cameras, but the outside of businesses, and we connect it to our Real Time Crime Center, so that we can see if there are offenders that are coming. We want to see them going. We want to see their egress routes. We want to get information about them that we can push out to our employees. Year to date, we have over 1,100 cameras that have been integrated into our Real Time Crime Center, and we want to continue to push this, so we're encouraging all businesses throughout

our City to connect your cameras to us. We also have what's called registered cameras, and the difference with our registered cameras, those are residential cameras, and no we don't want to connect and see what is going on around your home or in your home, but we want you to register those cameras, so that if there is an incident around your neighborhood or on your street, our detectives, as they are following up on that crime, can reach out to you and say, I believe you have some footage, would you share that footage with me. Knowing who those registered camera owners are really helps us with that situation. Connect Charlotte is a wonderful tool. I was very happy coming here to Charlotte to see that we had it. I had it in Raleigh, and we were able to solve a lot of crime as a result of it. So, if your camera is not registered to Connect Charlotte, and you live in Charlotte, we want you to connect. You can go to [connectcharlotte.org](http://connectcharlotte.org). You just type that into your web browser, and it will pull up the information that you need to be able to integrate or register your camera.

Another technology tool that I think is important is in-car cameras. You will see that our officers have body-worn cameras that they wear on their person, but we do not have in-car cameras. That's something that I'd like for us to bring back, one, because it really enhances transparency. It enables us to capture more information, and I see it as a community safety tool for us to have. We have started a pilot where we're testing some of those cameras. We started that in August of 2025 with only 20 vehicles, but I would like that to be an initiative that we expand throughout the organization.

Also too, Drones as First Responder, I think that is important for us to have. We have spoken about that. Council, thank you again for supporting that initiative. Our police foundation has also supported us with Drones as First Responder. We have not launched it yet. We're still in the initial phases of that, but the resources and the efficiency I think that this brings will be good for our police department. We definitely want our officers being available to respond to our high-priority calls. Drone as First Responder helps us to go to those lower priority calls, or if we need to upscale and send them to high critical incidents type of things we can do that. We can launch these drones right from the field anywhere in our patrol divisions, and we're able to get an aerial view of what's going on in that area. Again, I think this is a wonderful tool that we'd want to incorporate here at the police department. With our Drone as First Responder, we're looking to roll that out in fourth quarter of this year.

So, I talked to you about some violent crime prevention tools that we have. The other area that we're focusing heavily on is building out our community engagement. CMPD has always had a wonderful reputation of being connected to our community. We really want to enhance that even more, expand it as much as we can. I personally believe that public safety is a shared responsibility. We just can't say that the police is solely responsible for the safety of our community. We really have to look to the community to be our eyes and ears, so that there's visibility, there's transparency, and also collective responsibility.

So, in 2026, we're going to continue our commitment to collaboration by expanding programs that connect our officers with those neighborhoods that they're in. I'm a proponent that every single officer is a community officer. Yes, we have Community Coordinators. We have teams of people that are addressing community problems, but at the end of the day, every officer should be engaged in the community in between calls, getting out, talking with those community members. In fact, I shared that with our Command staff just this morning, that we want to see more of that in 2026.

Some other ways that we are connecting with our community include having my Let's Talk About It sessions. I've done two already last week, and we're doing two more this week in our community. We're hitting every quadrant of the four sections of Charlotte to be able to talk about the issues that are important to the community. For me, it's about telling them what my priorities are, but also listening to what the community says is important and that we should be working on.

Another community engagement that we are ramping up is just partnering with our faith community, also to our educators and our local organizations, our nonprofits, any

organization or group that is interested in public safety. We want to make our community safer. We do want to work with them. I think that the community is our eyes and ears. The more engaged they are, the better it is for us, and in reducing crime and disorder within our community.

The last area I want to talk about with you today is just improving our employee wellness and our morale. We all know that in order to deliver public safety we have to invest in our people, we have to have the best of the best in our organization, and making sure that they are supported and have the things that they need. Our ability to reduce crime and strengthen trust in our community and support our officers really depend on having a fully staffed department. For me, it's not just about the numbers, even though we're trying hard to fill our vacancies and we're going to continue doing that, it's about getting the right people in the seats, making sure that we have quality employees that reflect the values and the diversity of our City. We just recently graduated one recruit class, we have three more in the hopper for this year, along with two lateral classes. We're going to keep pushing to make sure that we have enough resources on the street to be able to work through our problems that we see. With recruiting employees and building the morale within the organization, we know that we have to have competitive incentives, salaries and such, so that we can bring in the best and the brightest. One of the things that we have, and actually many of the things that you're responsible, Council, for doing, which is great for us, we have a language incentive, we have education incentive, residency incentives. I think those are all wonderful. One thing that we're rolling out internally is providing a bonus or an incentive for our employees to recruit more people into the organization. I tell our officers, I say nobody knows better than we do who should be our backup, who should be in this field. So, our police foundation has been very gracious to us, and so we have some funding to really expand that incentive.

One of the other ways that I'm really focusing on retention, and that's the recruitment side of the house. I'll turn now to the retention side of what we're doing. Within my first 60 days, I sent out a climate and culture survey to our employees. I really wanted to know what is important to them? What do they feel that we should be focusing on as an organization to build the morale? That survey went out. We got a lot of responses back. We're still sifting through all that data, but from that survey, we're going to build impact teams, actions committees, to be able to solve whatever the issues are. I told our police department, I said, if you're going to complain about something you got to bring me a solution, you've got to tell me how we can solve it, how we can fix it. So, we're going to be building out those teams to start working on those problems that they have identified within the organization.

Also, to the wellness aspect, and Sergeant Phillips talked about some of the things we're doing public facing for wellness, but we're also looking inwardly at our department, making sure that our employees are whole holistically. So, we do have a therapy dog, which is wonderful. We have peer support. We have other programming that really helps to touch our employees who are dealing with traumatic things. I mean, every single day, they're going from call to call that is very difficult, things that are very difficult to see and even comprehend, but they're doing an outstanding job of being able to work through that. From the leadership level, I want to make sure that they're going to be okay mentally with what they're seeing. We have a program in which employees, if they go to seek counseling or they seek counseling, whatever is not covered by insurance, our police foundation is giving us funding to cover the remainder of that call. We really want to make sure that there's no stigma attached to getting help if you need it, and so that program helps us with that.

Also too, we're focusing on development of our personnel, always about succession planning, I talk about that all the time. We've got to think about who's going to replace us when we transition out or when we retire, and so building up our police department is huge. We have a very, very young police department, just because we've seen so much attrition in the last couple years, so we want to make sure that they're developed and they can meet the challenges of the job.

Then lastly, it's just recognition. Just today, we had our Officer of the Month recognition. We want to make sure that our professional staff and our sworn employees feel valued, that they know we see the work, and that what they're doing is making a difference for our community. In my 100 days that I've been here, I've been out in the field, I've been running, going here, there, everywhere, and I've been going to our roll calls, visiting with our employees. Letting them see me, listening to what they have to say. Beyond just doing the survey, it's important for me just to interact and engage with them on different levels.

Then lastly, just talking about 2026. I believe truly this is a year of momentum. This is a year that we are going to keep building on the things that we have here at CMPD, but even expanding and stretching folks. I've already tasked my team with all these various things. I know they said, she's coming in hot, she's got all this stuff going on, but I think it's important for us to continue, not to get stagnant, not to keep doing business as usual, but to look at creative ways, innovative ways that we can expand and that we can make sure that our City is safe. This month will mark my 100 days as Chief, I will be doing a State of the Department message, as I promised in the early days of getting here, and I'm going to provide transparent information on our progress, our challenges, and also the road ahead with our department. Again, I feel like the momentum is on our side. We're doing a lot of good things. I love the energy that our employees are exhibiting, and so we're going to continue to capitalize on that. Together with our officers, our partners and our community, we will continue the work of making 2026 a safer year for our police department. I often say that my goal is that Charlotte will be the safest large city in the nation, and we'll keep working towards that. That is all that I have for you today. I'm happy to answer any questions, and in fact, I'm going to ask the rest of my team, our Deputy Chiefs, if they will come forward, so that we can address any questions that you may have of us.

Ms. Campbell said wow, you guys are so lucky to have this woman here as your Chief of Police, let's give her a hand. I just want to repeat one thing that she talked about in terms of technology, and the drone program. I cannot tell you how invaluable drones were in emergency preparedness and response. We saved lives with drones, because we physically couldn't get out there. Those drones helped us identify people who were hanging from trees and stranded, and all over the place. So, it is broader public safety, and it's emergency preparedness. So, that's one you guys really need to think about amping up.

Ms. Ajmera said Chief, thank you so much for your bold leadership, and absolutely, we are so lucky to have you representing us and our CMPD. You did an excellent job at the hearing in February 2026. You did not only talk about the progress and the success, but you also talked openly, honestly, and transparently about the challenges that we face, especially with recruitment and retention, and asking the support of our state legislatures. I applaud you for doing that. Obviously, you talked about the top priority of competitive pay, and I would like us to go a step forward. We shouldn't just settle at competitive pay, we should be leading the nation when it comes to our officer's pay for recruitment and retention. That's how we are going to address the vacancies that we have. I see Mr. Jones is taking notes of all the budget requests that's coming his way. This is my third request, but in all seriousness, officers put their lives on the line every single day to protect us. We lost one of our own in the tragedy in East Charlotte a couple of years ago, and I think the least we can do is to lead in this space and pay them really well. So, I hope that we will show that in this year's budget that you'll be proposing that will help the Chief in addressing the vacancies. Is there anything that you have a specific ask from this Council, other than the pay? I took the note when you talked about it at the hearing. You also had a specific ask in terms of the take-home cars, and I think that certainly needs to be a priority. I know we have elevated that in our state legislative agenda as well as federal legislative agenda, but we also need to do our part, because that is a number one factor for recruitment and retention, and I hear that from FOP (Fraternal Order of Police) Officers and the community, so I hope we can address that in this year's budget. Is there anything else that you would like us to champion in this year's budget?

Chief Patterson said thank you, Councilmember Ajmera. Yes, I think you hit the nail on the head, those are the two main areas I've said publically that I think is important for us. Also too, we're funding new positions that were grant funded before. The department's going to have to absorb that. So, we're hoping that we'll be able to fill those positions and get funding for it. The number one thing I think, we have to be competitive as an organization, and the way to do that I think is through salaries, that's one thing, and then also too the take-home cars. I think when we lose officers to other agencies, those are the two things that we're often hearing.

Ms. Ajmera said thank you.

Mr. Graham said first, let me congratulate you and your team. I think we made an excellent choice, Mr. Manager. For the last eight weeks since the first of the year, I've seen you all over the City, either I'm coming and you're going, or I'm going and you're coming. So, the visibility of the police chief, and even the officers seem to have a pep in their step, and I really want to thank the officers for really protecting and serving. I do also want to, and I mentioned it at the last Council meeting, your presentation in Raleigh, along with the City Manager, and the Mayor and the DA, demonstrated high competency for our community. Even to the staff assembled here, we had a rough six months of 2025. The stats tell a different story for sure, but we still have some tough time and the way the staff responded to the FTA (Federal Transit Authority) and to the State Attorney's Office and the Auditor's Office, and the Oversight Committee, the time, the work, the preparation to demonstrate that our community has safety as our top priority, and we have the receipts to show it. I think everyone who participated, the Manager's Office, his Deputy's, your office, your leadership team, should be commended, because unfortunately sometimes bad things happen to good people, and it's no one's fault.

So, I just wanted to encourage you and your team, Deputy Chief at the end, who has always been accessible and available and responsive every time I call or text on members of the community. I think that goes noticed, I notice your commitment and the commitment of your teams, and so I'm just excited. I'm with Ms. Ajmera in reference to trying to identify ways we can help. I didn't know all the police cars didn't have cameras, I just assumed that they did. Obviously, drones are important, and technology enhancement is important and pay is important. So, I'm all on board of kind of working with the management team to demonstrate from a fiscal perspective that we're willing to be all in on public safety. What you're doing in Uptown with the Special Entertainment District is really important. What we're doing to secure large crowds, whether it's a Charlotte FC (Football Club), NBA (National Basketball Association) game, even at the Bank of America Stadium, all that is really, really public safety. So, no question here, other than to say, keep the momentum up, and let us know how we can help you.

Chief Patterson said thank you for that, Councilmember Graham, and I've got to say, like my boss always says, it's not just one person, it's not just one team, it is team Charlotte. I think everybody contributes in a special way, and we saw that in Raleigh when we went there. So, thank you for your comments, and we're going to continue working on it. We want to make sure that we keep our City moving forward.

Ms. Anderson said thank you, Chief and team for being here, and I'm really excited that we made the choice that we did. You definitely have hit the ground running, and I welcome the partnership with you as we discuss public safety as the Chair of the Public Safety Committee. I want to say, I have your book in my backpack, and I walk around with it all the time, because inevitably I'm getting questions about safety, and I always like to be able to whip it out and give correct information, but some really phenomenal numbers in this book. So, congratulations on last year. I will say, when I spoke to you, I think was in our very first meeting you said, "Well, this is really good information and great performance, but I don't know, I'm a little concerned, because it's difficult to produce double digit decline year over year," and so I really just want to underscore to you that within your first 120 days, typically when you start a new job you have about three to six months of grace period to mess up, to ask for the world, ask for the moon and everything, and I encourage you to do that as you're hearing from some of my other

colleagues, because once you get further down the runway, it gets harder and harder to do. So, definitely think about what you need in order to continue the momentum and advancing, and provide us a prioritized list.

The other thing I want to say is, with the work we're doing Uptown in partnership with Duke Energy around the environmental work, Mr. Graham, I think it's going to be really, really great work in terms of enhancing safety. You mentioned that perhaps a next step could be South End, as well as your exiting from South End, but just thinking about other areas in the City where we could partner strategically with some of our partners within the ecosystem of the City to think about doing things like that and others that can enhance the good work that your officers are doing.

Chief Patterson said yes, ma'am, and thank you so much for noticing the work that we're doing and commenting on that, and the grace period, can I get an extended grace period, please, a little bit longer than three months? No, but you're talking about this ecosystem, which is really important. In fact, Deputy Chief Bryley and I have already been talking about even going beyond the lighting that Duke Energy's doing. We've got a look at just the overall esthetics. We're talking with C-DOT (Charlotte Department of Transportation) about striping our streets, because we know the broken windows theory, if things look broken people are going to think that. We want to make sure that our Uptown is as vibrant as it can be, so we're already having those conversations, and I think we've got some things already planned for that. Yes, again, team Charlotte is working altogether on it, so thank you.

Ms. Anderson said excellent, thank you.

Mr. Driggs said Chief, welcome back to South Charlotte. I've seen you I think at least three times here already, appreciate that. So, I went to Raleigh to observe those hearings, and actually I'll admit to you, I went mainly to make sure they didn't try to hire you back, and I heard a lot of people wanting to do that. I just want to say, the opening statement was harsh, and then after you guys had spoken, and this is the District Attorney, you, the Mayor, the Manager, I think they were really impressed. I talked to a couple of members of the panel afterwards, and so the tone of the conversation when you spoke, and the follow-up questions you got, indicated I think a real impact for our benefit, and I did want to thank you for that.

I have two topics, quickly, that I want to ask about. One of them is AI (Artificial Intelligence), and drones and facial recognition. There's anxiety around privacy issues. So, how can you increase your ability to identify danger spots and people, and then not make other people feel that they're being watched inappropriately? You already talked about the connect thing, and how I know that some people have said, I don't want to do that, or I don't like the idea that the police can see everything in our neighborhood, that kind of thing. So, that's one, and the other one is, hot topic today, it's the cooperation or lack thereof between CMPD and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). So, there are two topics for you, you've got about three minutes for both of them.

Chief Patterson said thank you for that, Councilmember Driggs. I'll start off with the AI question or the comment that you made on that. The reason we're putting so much emphasis into community and building community, so that they will trust us, so that we will be aligned with what their needs are and that they will understand that any kind of AI kind of generative thing that we're coming up with or doing, and I listened to the presentation on last Tuesday I think it was, or Monday, that it is the City is formulating an AI policy, so we're not operating outside of that so let me just be clear. We know that we just have to build that trust so they trust us that we're doing the right thing with the data and with the information. It goes back to what I said about best practices and what other agencies are doing as well. I think there are other agencies that are doing it right that we look at. We're very data driven. We make sure that we're doing things for the right reasons or that is my approach, as we move forward, that we're not just out there testing something just because. What has the data shown us, what has best practices told us about that kind of technology, and should it be something that we're making an investment within our community, because we don't want anything that's going fragment

that trust that we have. That's the worst thing you can do is when your siloed and it's us versus them. Been there, done that, do not want that at all. I see the value in making sure that we're building and working with our community. Before we roll out any of these kind of technologies, Drone as First Responder, of course we're always going to have sit-downs with the community, describe what it is, talk about what it is, make sure that we're consulting with our legal team, that we're not stepping or violating privacy rights or the rights of our residents. So, that's number one, that's important to us.

Then, you talked about CMPD and ICE. Again, I'm a person about building collaborative partnerships and relationships. When ICE came to Charlotte last year, Operation Charlotte's Web, I know that Chief Jennings reached out to that leadership to get as much information. That's the same approach that I would take if we learned or if we knew that they were coming here. We meet and work with our federal partners all the time. The relationship there is really, really strong. ICE, we haven't heard anything from them, but I will continue to push and if they have information, that they will share with us. Of course, I think everybody in the room knows that we do not enforce immigration laws, that's hands off for us. As a jurisdiction and municipality, we just don't handle those kinds of things. If ICE were to call us, because there's a breach of the peace, or there's a criminal action, we would respond to that, just as we would with any other citizen or any other entity. So, I just want to be clear that everybody knows, though, that we don't enforce immigration laws.

Mr. Driggs said thank you.

**Councilmember Watlington** said thank you to everyone that's here today. Every time I see you I'm going to tell you I just admire you. I appreciate it sticks with me that people after 30 years within the organization were asking for your leadership, and to me that speaks to consistency of character, so thank you for who you are as well as what you do. I've got a few quick questions. Prior to my time on Council, I served on the Civil Service Board, and as part of that service, of course, we get to see the numbers for recruitment and also graduates. So, I just wanted to understand in light of what you're discussing in terms of recruitment, can you walk me through where we're seeing drop offs, because at the time, the conversation was really around how do we make sure that we get a sufficient number of recruits through the academy, not just in the pipeline, and so I'm curious, especially as we think about retention, what the retention rates are at what levels, as we think like future forward planning. Where are we seeing folks drop off or come into the system? So, I'd just like a little bit of context as it relates to what those numbers look like.

Chief Patterson said okay, sure, and I'll say high level, and then I'm going to ask DC (Deputy Chief) Chickoree, who is over our academy, recruitment and training, to fill in the gaps there. I would just say high level from sitting on the Train and Standards Commission, when I was in Raleigh and even previously when I was here before, where we see some consistent areas as, one, there's not an interest in this profession, so again, we're trying to be out front with the community to drum up that interest. Let people see it as a noble profession, and that this police department is very professional in the work that we do. So, that lack of interest in this job, and then secondly the standards. We want to make sure that our standards are the highest, so that we protect our community, and sometimes our recruits just can't live up to that standard, whether it's something in their background or some life experience that disqualifies them from our process, or then when they get in our academy, they can't continue to meet those standards. Just specifically about where we're losing them in the pipeline, DC, can you talk a little bit about that?

**Deputy Chief Zerubabel Chickoree, CMPD** said hi, good afternoon. Dr. Watlington, how are you doing? First of all, I serve as the Deputy Chief over Learning and Wellness Bureaus at CMPD, which of course encompasses recruitment and training, and unfortunately there is a point where we are seeing folks that are dropping off, and this is in regards to the people that are actually applying. They're going to the City of Charlotte website. They are doing the questionnaire. They are submitting their F3, which is their law enforcement application to be an officer in the state of North Carolina. As we get

them into the pipeline, I mean, we did some really great things a few years ago, which was the job related physical agility test just became a marker. It wasn't a point that we could actually exclude people from coming on the department. The testing we have now with the written exam is standard, and we use it to gauge their intellect or academic, where they are so that they can do the work as the work is quite difficult. We have seen some trends in where they fall off, and it's during the background. Unfortunately, a lot of it has to do with recreational drug use, and it is something that is becoming more prevalent and we are working a little harder now. We are just rolling out a plan where actually one of our captains will be going out to college classrooms to talk to, guess what, criminal justice classes, to let them know, hey, if you are interested in a career in law enforcement, here's some things you should not do. You should not use drugs that are going to disqualify you from when you actually apply. So, this is something that we all have to see now, drug use in America, it is at an epidemic proportion, and we see it from the conversations you had earlier about where it's taking folks from the unhoused to those that suffer some symptoms related to drug use, but yes, first marker is they disclose drug use at a point when they're in the background investigation, and then they become disqualified.

So, as we get people in the door, that part's working, your advertising, your benefits, all those things are working great to get people in the pipeline, but this is the first breakdown is that they disclose that they have used drugs, which disqualifies them, depending on what type of drug it is. The other part is that they do not tell the truth. The police department has a polygraph section. You have to take a polygraph exam when you come in. I mean, we laugh and joke about it, but this is something where I want you all to understand, if they disclose something and tell the truth about it, even though it's a mistake, we don't necessarily disqualify them, but when they're questioned during the polygraph process, and they give a completely different answer, and when they're questioned they go, you know what I lied about that, or we can prove it. A lot of it has to do with, we have had people that have committed crimes that've never been charged that they disclose it during that, They disclose that they have committed crimes that we cannot hire. Our standard is exactly what the Chief is staying. We have to maintain a standard, so people have ethical and moral clarity, because this job is quite a burden for those that are willing to carry it, but we have to make sure that those are the right people. I hope that answers your question.

Ms. Watlington said it does, especially for the recruitment. Are you able to speak a little bit about once folks are in, and as we look at like staffing and succession planning, where we're seeing our officers drop off, or do we have a lot of experience.

Deputy Chief Chickoree said so, we've done better, and then you're right. You have to remember a couple years ago we got hit with something no one expected. It's called the BLET (Basic Law Enforcement Training) pilot program. They redid, Council members, the entire Basic Law Enforcement Training program, added over a month to it, actually a couple months, I know Chief Bryley was on that, so it's two months, yes, thank you Chief, and the curriculum became quite difficult and there was a skills portion, the driving portion became more difficult, as you have to get more driving courses you had to pass. Think about all our young people. I have a 17-year-old. He doesn't have his license yet. He doesn't want to do his driving hours. So, think about that, we're coming out of a COVID generation, where people did not get behind the wheel and drive. So, we had people that were failing the driving portions. We had people that were failing an incredibly difficult firearms portion, the shooting part of it, it was very difficult. It was a very cumbersome process to onboard this training program. We had to get to a point where our trainers became familiarized with the curriculum, so that they could effectively teach it with confidence, and then also develop the plans within the academy itself. For example, we learned that we could actually do firearms practice during lunch, so we gave them the opportunity. We had the same thing for driving.

So, we are now coming out of a point where we did lose a number of recruits to some of these skills-based portion of the academy. Firearms and driving. Now, we have been able to now mitigate some of those things. We have this recent class that's sitting in there now, the senior class. They have already passed all their firearms, which is

fantastic. Now, the driving part we're still working with. We're looking at looking at some technology regarding a driving simulator so that we can help with this. I was talking to Councilmember Mitchell too, as well. Some other parts to it, like this year, typically we depend on JAG (Justice Assistance Grant) funding to pay for our interns from the Bureau of Justice. We did not get it, so Chief Patterson had to find a way for us to support those interns, and instead of having a normal class of 40 interns, we had to reduce it down to 30. We have a number of applications that've come in, but I believe the department is now really looking at shouldering that burden. We actually have capacity to handle up to 60 interns. Now, interns are great, because to your point, it already familiarizes these young people, typically juniors and seniors that are rising to the point of, I want a job so I can go right into the police department, and we already prewarned them with the knowledge of don't use drugs, don't get a DWI (Driving While Intoxicated), don't engage in risky behavior that's going to cost you a job. So, we had to cut back on those numbers this year.

Chief Patterson said yes, that's our pipeline there.

Deputy Chief Chickoree said yes, and it's been high. We've had a lot of interns apply to the agency, just so you are all aware, and they are working with us now for several years.

Ms. Watlington said thank you, DC Chickoree. That is very helpful as I think about the pipeline. So, my next question is about, once they're in, you're a sworn officer and you're growing through your career, what are we seeing in terms of trends, as far as, I'll say experience and growth through? Are we seeing a drop off of officers? The reason I ask the question is because we often are in these conversations about neighboring jurisdictions and what they pay, and it may be, oh, well maybe their starting pay is more, but once you get to so many years of service it levels off. I'm curious, for any particular demographics of officer's whether it's years of service, whatever it is, are we seeing any trends in terms of attrition?

Chief Patterson said yes, so I'm going to ask DC Bryley, because she has patrol services where she has the bulk of the officers, so you want to talk about that?

**Deputy Chief Jacquelyn Bryley, CMPD** said hi, good afternoon, Deputy Chief Bryley over patrol. One of the things that we look at and we see consistently is probably around that three-to-five-year mark where officers become either burnt out or stagnant in their current position. Again, most of them are on second or third shift, pretty much going from call to call, and that's one of the reasons why one of the Chief's priorities is our employee wellness. So, trying to put different things in place, because sometimes we do lose folks who want to go to other agencies for a take-home car, a better schedule that a smaller agency can provide them. One of the biggest things that we get a lot of feedback on are the staffing pools for our special events. We're a large city. We recognize that as we bring events to our City they have to be staffed with officers, and so a lot of what I do at my level with my majors and my captains is we really push that down to the troops, and what we've worked on is making schedule adjustments to where we're letting folks know well in advance, because again, if you're an average police officer, you get weekends off three times a year. So, out of a year, your rotation is three times a year, and so if you get a phone call on Wednesday saying, hey, we need you to work a Panther game this weekend for whatever reason, then that can impact an officer's wellness and morale, and so we've tried to find ways where we provide that information well in advance. So, it's been something as simple as printing out game schedules for the entire year. Say, hey, you pick which weekend you want to work, so that way you can control when you're going to be pulled on your day off. So, that three-to-five-year range, trying to find ways to help them have a good work/life balance, because at the end of the day, the generation officers that we have now, they value their time at home; they value their time away from work. As the Chief said, a lot of them are dealing with small, mini traumas every single day. On an average shift, they're going to see things that most people don't see in their whole life, and then they come to work and they do it again the next day. So, we as an agency have evolved so much to where it's like, yes, we understand that when you get your days off, we want you to actually

have your days off, and using specialized units to fill in some of those blanks. With Queen City Safe, for example, we don't pull any officers for patrol. They are still allowed to remain available for 911 call response, and we pull all specialized units to work these operations across the City.

Ms. Watlington said thank you so much for that, and my last question is just an observation. Is it just me or am I seeing a lot more blue shirts?

Chief Patterson said no, it's not your imagination. Yes, all the staff and I used to have white shirts, but one of things when I came in the door, I says, look, we're one team, one police department, we all need to look the same, and I think it really brings that focus that we are a team working together.

Ms. Mayfield said so, Chief, I will say welcome home.

Chief Patterson said thank you.

Ms. Mayfield said to the team, thank you. I have a couple of questions. One of them you kind of answered regarding artificial intelligence. I'll come back to that. I think it will be helpful, and this will be for you and for Manager Jones, to provide us with an update on the grants that have recently expired or about to expire, as we're having this budget conversation, so that we can get a real time idea of what funds are going to be anticipated with that initial grant investment, and what the expectation is. I'm not co-signing on your additional funds and other things, because we've got to have a real conversation about are we talking about a tax increase, which the City has not done in six years? It will be helpful for everyone to know what grants have been exhausted or about to exhaust within this upcoming budget cycle, so that we can try to allocate appropriately.

When we first started the conversations August, November 2025, regarding drones, we received a grant. I will say my former colleague, Councilmember Brown and I were the two no votes. I have a lot of concerns about challenges with AI, but initially what was identified was that the drones could be used for SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) standoffs, dangerous home screening which made sense. I think, and you don't have to answer this right now, this could also be in a report, to give us an idea of what you're anticipating for the drone usage. So, awhile ago there was an article, and in the article it was noted that drones will be stationed on police and fire department rooftops and monitored by CMPD's Real Time Crime Center. If that is still the case, and to give us an idea of outside of those most dangerous, because it would've been great if the incident that we had within the last few years where the drones were utilized to go in and assess the situation before we lost not only our family within law enforcement, but our partner family members within law enforcement. I want to just be able to clearly communicate, because you did share, which I appreciate, that you're going to meet with community regarding how drones will be deployed. I'm wondering if Council's going to be briefed prior to, or if we're going to receive an update, because a lot of times we receive an update on what has actually been done as a pilot, and I think this is an opportunity for us to be briefed on the front end to be a part of the conversation. So, if you have a response, I would love it, but I don't want to put you on the spot, because these are things that could be followed up on.

Chief Patterson said sure, and we will follow up, but I do want to say this, it goes back again to what I said just a few minutes ago is, I don't want to introduce anything into this police department or to this community that has not been tested, that we don't have best practices around. I will share in Raleigh we had drones, and I saw the value in having it, particularly for safety. When you have that aerial view of somebody who might be carrying a firearm in a protest, or sitting in a parking deck that's watching activity happen during a protest, and having those eyes in the air like that, really, really helps, and being able to send that in before you send an officer, as you alluded to, that is good for us, but we will certainly make sure that we have those conversations and we get the information to you. I think, DC Bryley, have we already started, or had some conversations with the community, even before I got here?

Deputy Chief Bryley said yes, we had some, and it was really centered around the transparency portal, that was a really big piece for us as far as the public face and forum where it shows flight patterns, flight locations, and the program that we're looking to stand up is all tied to 911 call response. So, there is not a surveillance piece to it. The only piece that would have a larger impact would be for our large festivals and events that we have when we have a lot of people in a small condensed area where our Real Time Crime Center can't see those cameras, like the Chief said, weapons in crowds, things like that that we want to mitigate before something large happens, but mainly it's a Drone as a First Responder, so responding to 911 priority 1, 2 and 3 calls for service, which again, one example when we were testing it out was a loitering call for service, where the people had already left, and so there was no need to send two police cars to that location on a side of a store where the people had already left, and that freed up those two cars to go to two different calls for service, whereas before, that would've tied up to two officers probably 15 to 30 minutes before they could've responded to something else.

Ms. Mayfield said and Manager, you can help with this. Did we ever deploy the residents that will show up for traffic violations or traffic accidents? So, one of the challenges, which we're seeing across the nation. You received an email the other day on a particular, I'm not even going to bring it, we'll figure that one out. The challenge is, across the nation, you're having people part of an organized piece that will drive fast, jump in front of you, slam on brakes and/or back up to hit you. Our officers, if they don't see the accident, you're having conversation about what happened. Are we looking at utilizing the drones to help with that piece and/or tying into our cameras to try, because that's one of those ways where thinking about what was just mentioned. If we don't have the officer go out, the time commitment of that, the drone could probably get there a lot quicker, and if it's already tied into the business cameras then you can actually see what's happening, because we're getting more incidences and/or hit and runs, including unfortunately our colleague where the vehicles end up totaled because of a hit and run and/or the person did not have valid information, valid license, valid insurance. Trying to figure out how we're balancing that, because we have so few of you, and as the City is growing, trying to get a better idea of how we might be able to utilize this technology and/or if it's already being used in those ways.

Chief Patterson said sure, and I don't think we've had discussions on that, but we certainly will. We'll huddle and talk through it, and then we'll make sure we get a response to you.

Ms. Mayfield said thank you, Chief.

Ms. Campbell said alright, next, and we've got about six minutes until the next session.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said thank you Chief, thank you team, appreciate, good seeing you again. Thanks for the great presentation. I want to talk a little bit about where resources are allocated on response times and making sure that we have an equitable approach in ensuring that resources are allocated in other parts of town that might not have those same resources. So, for example, the Entertainment District Unit, I think that's a great idea. I think there are different pockets across the City where there are maybe a strip or boulevards of clubs, venues, etc., and seeing how we can perhaps, to your point you mentioned earlier, Operation Safe Season and Operation Queen City, making sure that it is also replicated in that way. Any thoughts on that?

Chief Patterson said well, as we continue to build the department and get staffing, then certainly we can have different teams in those locations. EDU (Entertainment District Unit) is focused in the Uptown, primarily in South End, but we also have our Crime Reduction Unit. Although their function isn't specifically working like with the nightclubs, but that is another resource that we can kind of move around the City to be able to do some things.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said perfect. I also wanted to talk about CBP (Customs and Border Protection), first to shout out the Eastway Division, who did an incredible job, Sergeant

Decker, Lieutenant Jenkins there, who I for an entire week, would speak to them in the morning and in the evening to making sure that the protestors there, the young kids of immigrants were protected, and I think that really facilitated a lot of community building and trust during that time. I do want to be very clear, it was CBP here in November 2025, and ICE continues to just be in the community in general. You mentioned that you would respond to a breach reported by our federal agents, and I'm not trying to be political, but given the recent events that took place in Minnesota, given the taking of two American lives, two U.S. citizen lives, how would, or is there any conversations or appetites being discussed right now within the department, about a response to breach reported by civilian caused by federal agent?

Chief Patterson said so, if I understand you correctly, if we had a resident or citizen call us about a breach of the peace by CBP or ICE, would we respond or how would we respond?

Mr. Mazuera Arias said correct.

Chief Patterson said and so, we would respond like we would with any other incident, and in fact we had that in November 2025, where we had some incidents. So, we would respond as we would with any member of our community, and we would work through it. Just last week, I think it was, we met with the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), those are our partners, and we asked them if we were to have an incident here in Charlotte, who would be responsible for handling that investigation? We're already trying to have that kind of information on the front end should we find ourselves in those kinds of situations. It's hard to just navigate it totally, Council member, without the cooperation of ICE or Border Patrol, but my position is that we would respond just like we would for anybody else. We're not going to treat it any differently, and we are here to keep the peace. So, if there's a breach of that, then definitely we're the party that's responsible for doing it.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said thank you so much. I also want to better understand any vacancy levels between command, leadership versus patrol officers. Are there any discrepancies there or anywhere where Council can help in terms of that? How many positions you have filled up for command and leadership versus patrol?

Chief Patterson said not really. I think we're aligned the way we should be as an organization. I don't see a gap there with that.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said and then the other thing is, I was made aware of a culture and climate assessment. Have we gotten the results for 2025?

Chief Patterson said if you're talking about the internal survey that I pushed out to our department, yes, we have that, and like I stated before, we're going through that information, because it's a lot. Half of the department completed it, which was really good, and they were very candid with their comments and the things that they want to see in the organization. So, we have our Research and Planning team that has provided that to me, and we're just sifting through the data now.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said okay, perfect, thank you so much. Thank you for your time.

Chief Patterson said thank you.

**Councilmember Mitchell** said Chief, I'm just going to echo a lot of other comments. Thank you for coming home, we're very proud of your leadership. The second, quick question is, I can't wait to see on a serious note how we need to, from a budget standpoint, make sure you can fill those vacancies, because it's very obvious to us that we've heard loud and clear from our citizens, public safety is one of our top priorities. So, looking forward to supporting you.

Chief Patterson said thank you.

Mayor Lyles said I want to ditto what Mayor Pro Tem said. I mean, we're really proud of you being able to come back home, and I'm just really glad that we have you working with us, but I do have one question, and this is from my neighborhood, because they tell me things like this. I think that we have real concerns around speeding in neighborhoods, speeding next to schools, speeding everywhere, and I don't know what to do about it, but I do know that I see a lot of people that are driving fast. So, is there going to be an opportunity for something to take place for street concerns that the neighborhoods have? I hope Kimberly, you will do this for me, because it's by SouthPark and it's all of the things that they're trying to do there that's going well, restaurants, everything, and all of that, but the cars and the speeding are just really awful.

Chief Patterson said yes, ma'am, and I've gotten a lot of those complaints already around that, and particularly those small little motorized vehicles that young people are riding on sidewalks and in the streets and then yes ma'am, yes ma'am, all of the above. We do have Traffic Enforcement Team, DC Balamucki, you want to talk a little bit about that? Mayor, I will say officially we haven't put a full plan together, but our traffic units are out all the time, week after week, trying to address some of these issues, and DC Balamucki, I'll let you talk.

**Deputy Chief Bret Balamucki, CMPD** said yes, Mayor and Council, thank you for having us today. So, I'm Bret Balamucki. I'm the Deputy Chief over Special Services. So, I have like our motor units, the motorcycles. I've got our DWI Task Force; everybody that's focused specifically on traffic, all fall under there. So, just as an example, last week they were focused in the Providence Road area where they had generated several complaints. Some had come through your teams. They wrote over 300 tickets. So, it's really a collaboration. Debbie Smith is consistently reaching out, working on solutions as a partnership, the One Charlotte mentality, and it's something that we're going to continue to focus on. Even people being in the roadway and in the medians, one of the very first areas that we did the One-Step program that was a pilot was over in SouthPark, because we had people that were just sometimes impaired, sometimes not, walking in and out of cars and in the roadway, and that was one of the areas that we're really just trying to reduce traffic fatalities, reduce accidents. I know Liz Babson and her team have been working with us on initial discussions on some of the red light camera stuff to try to reduce speeds and just improve safety overall. So, it's something we'll continue to be committed on, and if you want to share that specific area that you guys and your neighbors are seeing issues, we can obviously as we do on a weekly basis, be very responsive on making sure that we give it a lot of attention.

Mayor Lyles said well, it has been an exceptional work that we've seen, it's just so much that you have to do, and I understand that. I won't probably talk to the neighborhoods about it. I think that it's really something that if you say that we can make it better. We've done all these crosswalks and everything, but nobody seems to pay any attention on Fairview Road.

Deputy Chief Balamucki said just so congested. There's so many people, and as people, I think what did you say in your town hall, City Manager, 157 a day, and we have so many people coming with two or three cars that it's just a lot more congested, but we'll continue to stay focused and try to make sure that we're all focused on Vision Zero.

Mayor Lyles said thank you.

Ms. Owens said thank you, Mayor. I very much value the fact that you're one of my constituents, and so please have your neighbors call me, email me. I welcome them on March 12, 2026, I welcome to hear from them, but I do want to piggyback on that very briefly. I wasn't going to comment, because I think so much has been said and so much is definitely on my heart as well how proud we are to have the talent that we have in this room representing us on public safety.

Traffic concerns are definitely something I heard a lot on the campaign trail. I think there is a deep and abiding appreciation for the fact that when we are short staffed, and you do need to prioritize things, sometimes traffic does need to fall on citizens to just do the right thing a bit more often. All that said, while I'm sitting here this morning, I've had two different requests from neighborhoods who want traffic calming. So, I think widening the lens with your experiences on what that actually looks like, working with our fire department to appreciate where speed bumps are actually not helpful and potentially are a problem, and just it's a wide circle of interdependencies and it's on us as representatives to explain that to people, because of lot of neighborhoods do think, okay, well, that's the only tool they think exists around traffic calming. So, I want to welcome those conversations between you and C-DOT around are we repainting? Are we perhaps making some of our lanes not quite as wide, so it's not as inviting to go as quickly down the street? Are we looking at our curbs? Are they so forgiving that you can take that angle a little bit faster than maybe you would have if you're going to bunk up your car a little bit? I mean, I think that there's a creative approach to this that doesn't necessarily mean we just have to throw more officers at it, because I get that we're growing too fast and you do have to triage, but I do appreciate what you do, but some creativity with C-DOT would probably be great too.

Chief Patterson said thank you for that, Councilmember Owens.

Ms. Campbell said great, alright. Let's give this group another round of applause.

Chief Patterson said can I just close by saying thank you, Mayor, thank you, Council for your support of CMPD, and we're hoping that you'll help us keep that momentum going that we have already started.

Ms. Campbell said good deal. So, let's take maybe two minutes to transition to this next group, and just allow them an opportunity. Okay, ya'll, don't go too far away, okay, please.

The meeting recessed at 3:18 p.m. and reconvened at 3:26 p.m.

Ms. Campbell said I know the item on the agenda seems a little bit ambiguous in terms of Authority Transition Overview, but we've got some experts, some attorneys that are going to help explain what this agenda item is. So, I will turn it over. By the way, we said we needed to congratulate the Chief of Police, you've got a hell of an attorney as well.

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#### **ITEM NO. 4: AUTHORITY TRANSITION OVERVIEW**

**Andrea Leslie-Fite, City Attorney** said thank you, Ms. Campbell. Mayor, City Council, thank you for the opportunity to be before you this afternoon. We're here to talk a little bit about this transition with The Authority. Since the voters approved the referendum late last year, City Council has been a strong intergovernmental partner with the MPTA (Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority). This Council has appropriated \$4.3 million for start up costs. You've approved an Interlocal Support Management Agreement for the Risk Management Services, and there's still much work to be done. The PAVE (Projects for Advancing Vehicle-Infrastructure Enhancements) Act has a number of key components to ensure an orderly transition, and part of that, the clear goals are two things, compliance with the law and stewardship, and when you talk about stewardship, we're not just talking about dollars, we're talking about our people and the financial assets as well. So, today we have with us Attorney Catherine Clodfelter, partner with Parker Poe, and she's here to discuss some of the key transition next steps that are coming in this type of transaction, and we'll talk about questions as they come up that you all may have. So, we have, not a ton of slides, because we wanted to leave space for the conversation. Again, the goal is to outline the framework and for the key next steps and to create space for a discussion for Council. So, without further ado, I'll turn it over to Catherine. Thank you, Catherine.

**Cathrine Clodfelter, Parker Poe Attorney** said alright. I am here to give you all an idea of what it looks like to transfer an entire city department to a newly formed public body. Almost all of what I will tell you is going to be general; there are two reasons for that. First, the details haven't been worked out yet. They are going to have to come back before you all to have been worked out. You will have to approve what a transition and a transfer looks like. The second is that the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority, the MPTA, is still being formed. It's still being set up. It is not a small task to set up a public body. It will not be the last time you hear me say that.

So, again, I will say generally what kinds of agreements we rely on in order to facilitate a transfer of a large number of assets, employees and operations, I can give you some examples, and I will intersperse some details that we do think have been at least somewhat worked out, or that we expect at this point. Still, this will be a somewhat unique situation. The biggest thing that you all have, that a lot of other transfers or consolidations between local governments don't have, is you have a statute that gives very specific details about what has to happen at the very beginning of a transfer process and gives you some timeline requirements.

I'll take a step back and recall the PAVE Act requirements just a little bit to make sure we're all on the same page. So, the PAVE Act, the state statute, requires both the City and the MPTA to come to some agreements, and I'll get to that, but also think back through the PAVE Act's requirements on what the MPTA has to do between the time it was first created until July 1, 2026. It's about six months. That public body will need to do things like create all of their policies, human resource related, operations related, fiscal management related. They will need to name a Finance Officer by July 1, 2026, in order to receive any of the state tax dollars. They'll have to create and approve a budget that's separate completely from an operations budget, on which you all will also provide approval. All of that will be worked on from the MPTA side. In parallel, all of the details about what a transfer of those assets, employees and operations, all of the details of those, of what that will look like, will be worked out. So, as those things happen in parallel, you're going to be talking about the transfer of ownership of CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) assets. Well, first we have to get a good idea of what we all agree to as CATS assets, which is undefined in the statute. You will have to discuss and agree on what it will look like for personnel to transfer from CATS department to the MPTA. How funds flowing from the state, which will start to flow to the MPTA on July 1, 2026, will need to come to the City in order to cover things like debt service that is protected in statute. You'll also have to talk about things like how liabilities are covered and shared, who keeps insurance on what assets, and you also need to talk through what and how you will have use agreements when the City still maintains assets that the Authority will end up using. So, these things happen in parallel.

What does it generally mean for a transfer? So, we'll take a step back and have more of a high-level overview. Know that a transfer almost always necessarily has to happen over a period of time, not at just one point in time. So, there won't be a date that everyone looks to and says, come that date there'll be no assets of the City, there'll be no operations, there'll be none of that, it'll all transfer all at once. It's just not going to happen that way, and it generally never does, and there are a few different reasons for that. In the grand scheme of things, there are a lot of programs that are involved in running public transit that a public body acquiring assets, whether it's newly set up or already existing, has to make sure are consistent. Even things like the programs to register when money comes through, pay channels, things like that, all has to be consistent. In terms of setting up a public body, the MPTA specifically, the MPTA will need to have benefit plans put in place before any employee can transfer, and that might take less time than it takes to pay off all the debt that has to be paid off for the big assets to transfer. So, you might have different points in time when different things can happen.

Let's slow down and talk to you about it just a little bit more. The City currently has outstanding debt that cannot transfer to the MPTA that's associated with CATS; that debt can't transfer. Any asset that serves as collateral for that debt also cannot transfer. So, the City will maintain some CATS assets for a long period of time, longer than the

employees might transfer over. So, for instance, when the MPTA is set up and ready to operate and have employees, it's important for employee retention that those employees go to their new place of business, learn the new policies earlier than maybe an asset can transfer. Let me give you a better idea of why. Some assets won't be able to transfer until 2031 at the earliest. There are other assets that will take until 2040 to come out of the debt period. So, you're not waiting that long to transfer operations and employees; you will transfer those earlier. So, there are going to be different points in time when you transfer different assets and different liabilities and operation.

This is pretty standard in transfers that I have worked with. There'll be sometimes when an asset can't transfer because of outstanding debt. Sometimes the local government that's providing the assets hasn't finished its audits and you need to wait for that to happen until you can transfer an asset, but employees are ready to transfer and that's important for employee retention. How do you work through that? How do you make sure as you're getting ready to transfer certain assets, all the employees, certain operations, that that timeline you've agreed on is something you can hit and do successfully without adversely impacting operations? In an agreement you come to milestones that must be met in order for a transfer to happen. So, these would be things like debt has to be paid off before the assets can transfer. A benefits plan, human resources plan, other human resources infrastructure, has to be set up before an employee can transfer. You would agree to those milestones so everyone knows, okay, here are the target dates, but here are the things that must be in place before operations, employees, and assets can transfer. This is going to change over time. I've just told you that assets might not transfer until 2031, some of them, some of them might have a longer run depending on the debt that underlies them, and some of them might be ready to transfer much earlier.

So, the way that you make sure that you can have one master agreement and other changes, is through a legal separation between, at the beginning we will agree to what this transfer is going to look like, the milestones that we want to hit, the general dates we think are set, and then along the way they'll be implementation agreements that might need to come back before you to make sure that we're transferring things in accordance with a manner that won't adversely impact operations and employees. In pretty much all of the agreements that I've been a part of, there's been one master agreement, and then along the way at least two implementation agreements, to make sure that as things are transferred it's done in a way that won't adversely impact. Deadlines change. Some of the third parties that the MPTA will need to work with will change their deadlines, and that will impact your deadlines.

I'm going to tell you everything I just told you again in a visual, in case you are a visual person. So, we are currently at the very beginning of that red timeline, it's just a timeline. The green bubble is supposed to tell you how long it's going to take the Authority to set up as a public body. Again, it is not a small task to set up a public body. So, they will continue to need to pass financial policies, human resources policies, technology policies, incorporate new software into their operations, all through a period of time that the transfer's going to take place. When the transfer period begins, we already know it has to be July 1, 2026, that's that first big blue bubble. The other transfer milestones are supposed to just represent general timelines you might come to. There's nothing set in stone yet, but you can imagine that first transfer milestone might be when a human resources infrastructure is fully built out and operations and employees are able to transfer. That next milestone might be when the first set of assets stop serving as collateral for some of the debt and those can transfer, and ongoing. At some point, you will get to a place where the last big asset transfers, the debt is gone, but you'll still need to have some long-term coordination between the City and the MPTA, simply because there are going to be some assets that are going to be shared. They'll be assets where the City owns the property and maybe the Authority is leasing the property, and so you'll have shared-use agreements. You might do the same thing with employees who are giving some time to both departments.

Again, on a high level, some of the factors that will impact how this transfer looks and the details about this transfer, the outstanding debt can't transfer between the City and

the MPTA, any debt serving as collateral cannot transfer, so the City will have the assets and the debt for a longer period of time. The MPTA will need to meet certain federal and state requirements in order to be able to have the operations and the assets, and again it takes a long time to set up a public body.

Let me give you a few expected time points. I say expected, because again these are not set in stone until you agree to them, all except July 1, 2026, which is the required state law period when an agreement has to start. The MPTA and the City saying, "This is how we think a transfer's going to look, here's our master agreement." Generally, if you're transferring employees and assets, there are two dates that are favorable, convenient during a year to transfer. The first is January 1<sup>st</sup>, because of benefits, that lets employees start a new benefit program without interruption or issues in their benefits plans. July 1<sup>st</sup> is another convenient transfer point, because you're ending one fiscal year, starting the next; it helps for accounting; it helps for budget purposes. So, in general, we expect that once the MPTA is able to set up its human resources infrastructure, its financial policies, and the other policies that need to be in place in order to accept operations and employees, that that January 1, 2027 timeframe is an expected timeframe employees might transfer. Certainly, by July 1, 2027 you would expect that operations would completely transfer. Most operations transfer with employees. You want the rolling stock, the computers that the employees use every day to transfer generally when the employees transfer. Again, I pulled out the June 1, 2031, timeline just to give a sense of, that's the first date that one of the debts becomes prepayable, so that's likely the first-time large assets that are securing the debt would be transferring. That is a longer time away than 2027.

I think I've given you what to expect, but let me give you the high level of what to expect. Significant collaboration and coordination is going to be needed between now and July 1, 2026, between the MPTA and the City, and after. There will be a lot of moving parts here. Even when a lot of the operations and the employees have transferred, there will be assets to collaborate over. We expect to set out very clear milestone requirements in an agreement, so that you all know when the MPTA is able to receive assets, operations, and when employees are able to transfer, and when that just wouldn't be possible; that's to keep adverse impacts from happening. Again, it's a period, not a point in time. You will likely see a staggered transfer of assets when they come out of debt, or as the debt can be prepaid those assets would transfer, and there are other stakeholders involved, of course, the federal and state government being one of them, and the other local governments around. So, there'll be a lot of conversations with those stakeholders as well. That's all I wanted to present to you all today. I know you all have a lot of questions, and I know you're all exhausted. So, we are here to answer them if you have them.

**Debra Campbell, Facilitator** said I know that was a lot of information, and you probably have been getting this information over time, but I thought she provided a very succinct and concise review of a lot of attention that has to be paid to this issue. You all don't have a choice. This has to happen, and resources actually have got to be devoted from particularly a staff perspective, coordinating with this new entity that is forming. So, let's start with questions.

**Councilmember Driggs** said the transfer of the employees is a particularly sensitive subject. Do we know what compensation levels will be there? Will they take their existing salaries with them, and related to that, can they still participate in the local government employment retirement system?

Ms. Clodfelter said it is a requirement of the PAVE Act that the MPTA will participate in the local government retirement system. So, yes, for your last question, they will participate in that.

Mr. Driggs said and they will take with them the benefits they've accrued, so their status won't change for retirement?

Ms. Clodfelter said yes. The details of what compensation would look like, how certain post-employment benefits will transfer as well, those are things that we won't have details about until the MPTA has a plan, creates those plans, and provides compensation and schedules. It is not uncommon in transfers for the transferring entity, so the City in this case, to insist on having discussions and understand what those compensations are and have that written into the agreement. So, those are things that can be written out, they're not things that we can talk through until the MPTA has that information.

Mr. Driggs said so, for example, we have a minimum wage of \$24 an hour. Is that a negotiating thing where we would say to them, we would like to see that travel with, I don't know how many CATS employees actually are at that level, but it's not binding on the MPTA, is that right?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said it's not binding on the MPTA, Councilmember Driggs, but what I would say is that there've been a lot of robust conversations with even some of the appointed officials for the MPTA about what those compensation structures look like on the City side to prepare the way for the next steps. At this point, they are hiring staff and getting their consultant staff up to speed on where we are, and so I have to say kudos to the team for sharing information early with that leadership team, so that they can move forward with those types of plans.

Mr. Driggs said thank you.

Ms. Campbell said thank you, Mr. Driggs.

**Councilmember Anderson** said thank you for the presentation, very good information. Just a couple questions. So, on slide seven, right there you have the MPTA has established human resource support. Are they currently working on their human resource policies?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said so, Councilmember Anderson, I would note that this is a plan for January 1, 2027, they are not quite there yet. They are thinking through these pieces with the development of policies, hard stop. They are hiring consultants, that's part of that \$4.3 million that has been appropriated for them to hire consultants to help develop those policies. Much of what we are doing includes sharing of our documents and how we do things here with the City in an effort to help facilitate their processes as well.

Ms. Anderson said I gotcha, I'm with you, but are they actively working on that? So, do they have a legal team, a consultant team that is working on the revision of those documents, standing up versions of their HR (Human Resources) policies?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said it is my understanding that they are not there quite yet. They have an attorney that they've hired for a limited purpose, but not fully built out this part of the process.

Ms. Anderson said okay. So, these dates that we're looking at, and I love your wording of it, that this is a plan, but are these dates a mixture of soft and hard dates, or are these hard dates?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said and I'll yield to Catherine in just a moment. That July 1, 2026, is a hard date. We've got to at least have a plan to move forward with some of these major steps. Catherine mentioned just a moment ago how some of this will be implementation, certainly implementation agreements that will follow suit, and so that will allow for the timeline to be a little bit more fluid, but again that July 1, 2026, is a hard date based on the PAVE Act, but Catherine if you'd like to add more.

Ms. Clodfelter said I think that's everything I would say. The one other thing I'd say is that that June 1, 2031, cannot move up for the transfer of assets that are securing Certificate of Participation debt, COPs debts; that's the first time very large assets could

transfer. Assets like rolling stock, computer, other small assets might be able to transfer earlier.

Ms. Anderson said okay, and then the current MPTA, do they have a funding source outside of the dollars that we as a Council voted to provide? Is there another funding source?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said no, Councilmember Anderson. They do not have a funding source at this time. Certainly, they are anticipating the tax to come in soon, but right now the \$4.3 million is the limited amount.

Ms. Anderson said so, given that position, and I thought that was correct, just wanted to validate it, I believe we should really be leaning into these beginning stages of corporation development. So, if they haven't started working on their HR policies and beginning to codify them, and we are effectively their only funding source, I think we should have a very strong position in how those policies are developed, City Manager, just my perspective, especially because our human capital is being transferred over.

Secondly, I'm not sure if you already have this, but because there is, as you have on slide five, this window of transfer, it's over many years, but in particular some of those big blue bubbles are really important in the beginning, I believe we should have a multidisciplinary transition team internally to be working on these things and advising. I think that would look like help to the Authority if we could certainly offer that, because we have that developed muscle of having operated for so many years, and we are the sole funding source for the moment.

The other question I have is, on this slide, and I can appreciate what you said about June 1, 2031, from a COPs perspective certain assets can't transfer, but do we have some idea of the percentage of assets that will be transferred over, these transfer milestones? So, will 50 percent of our assets be transferred in July 2027, or does it get smaller, does it ascend or descend? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Ms. Clodfelter said I do. I don't have specific percentages for you, but I think I can give you an idea of it. So, the assets that would transfer earlier are going to be assets that could be either determined to not serve as collateral for any debt, which will take some forensics to make sure we're accurate before we transfer anything, or assets that are serving as collateral that you can get released from the debt. In order to do that you have to have a valuation of all the assets, and it has to be some amount of the value that isn't needed to cover the remaining debt that can then transfer. So, given that, from what I understand in the conversations that we've had so far, a significant amount of the assets are covered by debt, or have been purchased using federal or state dollars, which is another thing I want to talk about. The majority of the assets, I think it's fair to say, will not be transferred early when the operations transfer. Those will be the smaller dollar value assets. It's probably also a smaller amount of assets, your cars, your vehicles that are used, your equipment that's used for going out and repairing, and then your computers, things like that, smaller dollar value and a smaller number of assets.

So, in addition to the debt, the other thing that the City will need to make sure of, is that none of the assets are covered by other agreements, like federal grants always come with agreements, state grants, DOT (Department of Transportation) always come with agreements. Most of those, all of them, require the City to get permission from the state or federal government to transfer those assets. That'll have to get worked through. That's not expected to be as long maybe as the debt payoff, that's another thing that will have to be worked through. So, to answer your question again more specifically, the smaller number of assets will probably transfer first, those will all be assets that are used during operations that the employees use, and generally that's so you don't have an employee of the MPTA using equipment daily that is an asset of the City. There's just policy overlap questions, there's insurance overlap questions, it's easier to transfer those things, but the bigger value assets are not going to transfer until much later in the process.

Ms. Anderson said okay, just last two points. I know there's a five-year window from when we actually began this agreement to begin the repayment of certain dollars, I believe City Manager, I might be getting that wrong. It would be really interesting to see how that overlays and works with these implementation agreements. Lastly, I would just say, I think it would behoove both us and the Authority to firm up these dates sooner rather than later, so certainly a human capital transfer date should be a hard date that we're working toward, because once it's a hard date, then everyone has to be prepared in order to do so. Thank you.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said if I may just share one thing quickly, to those earlier points, Councilmember Anderson. I want to share with you that the City Manager has worked very intentionally with the team to build a transition team internally, that is made up of multidisciplinary groups to ensure that on the City side we're prepared to engage with the MPTA in a meaningful way and share information early and quickly, so that the conversation can continue to happen, and so that hasn't been by happenstance, and I think there've been some fruitful conversations happening. I'll give a couple of examples. We have been providing board support for the Authority, both with drafting, helping to draft, some of their initial documents. Of course, they have outside counsel to help review that, but we've been in those conversations. I know that the Manager's Office has been intentional with sharing a lot of the data to help inform some of those questions. Another, for instance, when it comes to employee benefits, we want to make sure that those employee benefits are handled in an appropriate manner. Those marketplace considerations are very time sensitive. So, those are just some quick, early examples of how those communications have hit the ground running. I think once those consultants are in place, and some employees are hired, those will continue.

**Councilmember Owens** said so, in private practice I've done things very similar to this, but definitely not of the complexity, because I haven't had the overlay of municipal debt and just some of the complexities, so again, my hat is definitely off to ya'll as you go through this process. Can you speak a little bit, is the MPTA going to be set up as an entity that cannot take on the kind of debt that currently is held, and thus that's why we need to hold it for the long period of time? There's no ability for them to assume it, even if we are to get federal and state approval? Then, secondarily, is there then a sense of they will have constraints, because of the way they are set up, that they will not perhaps have access going forward to some of the same types of financing that the City has been able to avail itself of? Then I have a followup too, but start there.

Ms. Clodfelter said alright, I'll take your question in pieces, and I'll start with their authority, the MPTA's authority to enter into financial transactions like the ones that are outstanding. So, they have the legal authority. They are a public body, and the PAVE Act gives them the legal authority to enter into the same kinds of transactions that the City now has related to CATS assets. The reason why the debt can't transfer isn't related to their authority; it is related to two things. One, the debt instruments themselves say you cannot transfer this debt. The second is that the PAVE Act actually also says the debt cannot be transferred. There is a layer, though, that impacts the MPTA's ability to finance certain projects that goes beyond just their authority to do so. They will be a local government that has a bond rating just like the City does. Just like a person opening a new credit account, when they turn whatever age they decide to enter in that fun world, they'll have no history of a credit. They will have to build up that history. They might not have the same access to the bond market like the City does, but that's a layer above their legal authority. It's more of a practical issue about how expensive it is for them to access the same markets.

Ms. Owens said and that was somewhat where I was going, is whether we could anticipate that when we get to the end of this that we would still need to perhaps serve as a guarantor, as they sort of get more of a track record behind them, what that interaction between the City and the MPTA will be, so I just wanted to level set a bit. Then, I wanted to follow on, the talent that we have and talent retention has been an issue that I've seen in corporate M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions), where there is a long transfer process or there is a cumbersome and perhaps misunderstood or not fully trusted process. Are we in a position where we're able to make some retention

payments, or are we being thoughtful about the talent that we've got in CATS, and not losing that? I assume the answer's yes, but if you could just kind of give me some comfort on how we're going to retain people during whatever process this undertakes?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said so, I'll echo something that Mr. Manager had shared, somewhat as my marching orders for our team as we began this work, and that is to lead with people first and be intentional about how we manage the work. So, when it comes to what those next steps look like, we've been talking about communicating as early as possible once we have clear timelines. Part of that is communicating with our partner, the MPTA, as they develop their readiness for these transition conversations, but I wanted to start with that's the north star. I know that Manager Jones is here, and I want to yield to him to talk a little bit more about that, but that is a clear objective that he gave us as we began this work.

**Marcus Jones, City Manager** said so, I totally agree with the City Attorney. I would call it, there are three buckets, if you will, or three layers. Absolutely, positively, the 600-plus employees are number one. I mean, they've been with CATS many of them all of their career, and we're not going to do something to negatively impact them. Number two, we have to, Matt, this for you, we have to protect the finances of the City. Councilmember Owens, you weren't around a few years ago when certain things happened and it became very clear that the City operated CATS, and the City also backed the debt for CATS. So, we did some things, like we had to amend the Interlocal Agreement, and things like that. So, this PAVE Act is so important, because it took care of a bunch of those issues that made the City a bit concerned about having somebody else operate a transit system, and then the City backed the debt. The third piece would be, we want to make sure that the Authority is successful. It doesn't benefit any of us if the Authority doesn't come out of the block successful. What's really, really, really, really, really important is that we pulled together a great team, having Catherine and Parker Poe, having the City Attorney and her team. It's very important that the MPTA also pulls together a team, I mean, it's super important. The dependence on CATS employees, while we're doing a bunch of things, it's really important that they get their general counsel squared away. They make sure that they have somebody who's a transition manager for this, and those are the kinds of things that I think are super important.

Another thing that I think's really important is, it's very clear in the PAVE Act, in this legislation, that the tax levy will be July 1, 2026. So, you guys help me out, let me make sure I'm going out on a ledge here, that means the current Article 43 is going to make its way over to the Authority, that's the half cent sales tax, and the Article 34, the one percent sales tax is going to make its way over to the Authority. We are fortunate to get 40 percent of that back, the City and the towns. So, I wouldn't be too wrapped around the axle about this \$4.3 million. We're not going to do anything if we have those three criteria, to protect our employees, to protect the finances of the City, and to make sure that the Authority comes out of the blocks running smoothly. We'll make sure what is needed for the Authority to be set up is available. The thing that's really, really important is there are some things that are going to cost the City that's more than what's in the budget now, and we fully expect to be reimbursed for those costs. I wish we could give you a more definitive schedule. If it were two months ago, we may have been talking about July 1, 2026, employees being transferred over. We know that can't happen. So, think about it this way too, all the back office support that CATS has been receiving from the City goes away. So, they have to set up their own accounting, their own HR, their own IT (Information Technology), and we're going to try to do that in a way that is efficient, is effective, that hits those three principles that I just mentioned, but this is really, really, really big, and it's never been done before like this.

**Councilmember Mayfield** said just a quick question, have you all identified what, if any, employee absorption is going to need to happen for those current CATS employees that will not be going under this new Authority?

Mr. Jones said so, as of March 2, 2026, today, the concept is CATS, as an entity, moves over to the Authority with all of its employees.

**Councilmember Mazuera Arias** said I have a clarifying governance question, more so, does the Authority report to the City or the State? So, an example you had, MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) in New York City report to the Governor and the State, not New York City. Who's the authority over the Authority is essentially my question?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said so, the MPTA is a separate body, and they do not report to the City. They report to the State so to speak, but there are an entire entity, local governmental entity, just like the City, except there are certainly nuances with the municipalities versus authorities, but they do not report back to the City on any sort of affairs.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said so, the only reason I ask that is just to be very clear, this Council cannot make decisions on behalf of the Authority, except when it comes to this transfer process?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said that's correct.

Mr. Driggs said 14 appointments.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said well, we have the appointments, I'm sorry. You do have appointment power, yes.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said got it, thank you.

**Councilmember Graham** said just a clarifying question. When you said they report to the State, help me understand why that's a true statement?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said they have compliance requirements that the State, by way of the PAVE Act, I mean, that is the extent of it, much like the City of Charlotte has its responsibilities under state statute, etc.

Mr. Graham said okay, so that's not reporting, that's just compliance.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said compliance for that [inaudible].

Mr. Graham said because they're an independent authority.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said they are an independent authority, yes sir.

Mr. Graham said okay.

Ms. Campbell said Ms. Mayfield.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said I'll say that in the mic, because I think I was a little bit off mic. You all do have appointment authority for the members and their term limits and so forth. So, that is the nexus between City Council and the Authority.

Ms. Campbell said okay. Any other questions? So, you get an opportunity to exhale for like almost two hours.

Mayor Lyles said so, I just wanted to let everyone know about Renee Johnson's family issues. I went to visit her yesterday, and she was like, well, I should come to the retreat. I said, no baby, no, you're not doing that, you've got to do this. Her husband had open heart surgery, and he came home I think yesterday. I think when we have people together like this and we're talking about a team, that no matter what we're doing we're going to respect and honor that. His mother has come down to help Renee, Bishop is running up and down the stairs doing just fine, and I think a card or something like that. I don't know that you need to make phone calls, but it would be nice to send a note, or perhaps provide some food, something that would work for her and would be accessible. I just want everybody to know that. So, if you can think about it, if you have

the time or the opportunity, please keep her in prayer, along with her husband as he goes through his recuperation. Thank you very much.

Ms. Campbell said that was amazing, Mayor, that's what teams do.

**Councilmember Ajmera** said yes, thank you, Mayor, for bringing that up. I've had several conversations with Renee over the weekend, and as you know, Bernard was one of the biggest supporters of hers, and she talked about how Bernard was the chef, the driver, and nanny. So, I have started a meal train for her, and she did share with me that would help a great deal. I have sent you all a link. If you can sign up for a day or two, because the recovery is going to be eight to 10 weeks long. So, whatever you can do to support the family would certainly go a long way. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell said thank you, all.

Mr. Mitchell said I don't know about wrapping it up, but I'm just going to say two things to the presenters who are here, and to Council. I thought this was a great day one for all of us, and so tomorrow as we go to day two, we do have one important responsibility that we have to do, that is to vote on our priorities tomorrow.

As we started today talking about a team, I would like for you all to come in tomorrow in that same mindset with a team. So, with that in mind, when you leave today, you're going to get your swag that I hope you all will wear tomorrow. LaWana, don't look at me that way. So, as you go out, please pick up your bag and wear your swag tomorrow. At least 12 of us will match tomorrow, and Malcolm, no, it's not purple and gold. Malcolm's like, I ain't wearing no purple and gold. It's not red and white. It's the City colors of green and white. So, you've got a beanie, you have your jacket Victoria, you have a long-sleeved shirt Dimple, and last but not least you have sweatpants. Alright, you happy, LaWana. So, I look forward to seeing everybody in our team outfit tomorrow.

Ms. Campbell said okay, before you all leave, you've got a meeting, don't forget. You've got a meeting at the Government Center starting at 6:00 p.m., 267, and there's dinner before, and I just need to acknowledge just one staff person that I did not acknowledge, and that's Julia Martin who has worked weekends and the whole nine yards, thank you so much, and Amanda, and everybody that worked on this for this day. Come back ready for tomorrow, but you've got to get through tonight. Thank ya'll. See you down there.

The meeting recessed at 4:12 p.m.

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The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina reconvened for a Annual Strategy Session – Day 1 on Monday March 2, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Council members present were Dimple Ajmera, Danté Anderson, J.D. Mazuera Arias, Malcolm Graham, Lawana Mayfield, Joi Mayo, James Mitchell, Kimberly Owens, and Victoria Watlington.

**ABSENT:** Councilmember Renee Johnson

**ABSENT UNTIL NOTED:** Councilmember Ed Driggs

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**Mayor Lyles** said alright, I'm Vi Lyles, Mayor of the City of Charlotte, and I want to go around and have everyone on the dais introduce themselves. So, I want to start our meeting with this is the March 2, 2026, Meeting of the Charlotte City Council, which has reconvened to discuss the NC-DOT 77 Expansion Project. Before we continue, I want to briefly share that the Secretary Johnson and I have had several conversations, and he and his team have been working diligently on a number of important steps. Secretary

Johnson will be coming to Charlotte to host small group meetings with homeowners and neighborhood leaders along the I-77 Corridor, and those meetings have already been scheduled. He also shared his community engagement strategy, which includes establishing a Community Engagement Center that will serve as a resource for our community, a place where residents can access project information, ask questions, and discuss opportunities for the community enhancements. Office hours will be published in April 2026. NC-DOT is also continuing to evolve options for community benefits, which include feedback from community engagement sessions.

**Councilmember Driggs arrived at 6:02 p.m.**

This afternoon, Secretary Johnson's Office announced that the RFP (Request For Proposal) issue deadline will be extended to June 2026. This will provide more time for community feedback, and to take place prior to initiating the RFP. This continues to be steady, deliberate work, and we hope that we can encourage all of our residents to participate. There will be more discussion in committee this week about the project; however, I'd like to have Council have the opportunity to provide additional comments about these developments. So, with that, I think that we'll start again to discuss the City Council initiatives and thoughts before we move forward again for any questions available.

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**ITEM NO. 5: I-77 DISCUSSION**

**Councilmember Graham** said good evening, everyone. Last October 2025, Councilmember Mayo and I attended the initial press conference where NC-DOT announced their two design options for the expansion of I-77 South. Since then, I've been actively engaged in, for a wide variety of reasons, the progress made thus far. I think for me there are a number of guiding principles, as I think about how we should move forward and how I'm making decisions regarding this issue. One, I accept the fact that we can't move the highway. The highway is there where it's at. I accept the fact that history matters, and that's why I had Tom Hanchett, a historian, come to my town hall meeting to explain the history of displacement of African American communities, and the hurt and the anguish that that community still feels today from that decision, and that's why community engagement matters really, really a lot, because of that history. I went on I-77 South today to go to Ballantyne. As usual, coming from 85 to 77 South, I was stuck in traffic by the LaSalle Street exit [inaudible] my way to the Morehead Street exit, and I sat there again from Morehead to Westinghouse Boulevard. I think we all can agree that there's an issue with capacity on the highway, and that something has to be done. I accept that as a fact. It's the how that we're trying to answer tonight. The design matters, and impact, no matter what design that is chosen, whether it's the first option that they threw away, the elevated option that they're currently considering, or even an alternative option, there will be impact.

So, as we begin this discussion, it's important to acknowledge from my perspective, and meeting with NC-DOT for the last three weeks, that they recognize that the community engagement efforts were not sufficient. They have acknowledged the need to improve on how they engage, shifting from talking at residents to truly talking with them. That commitment and improved engagement must remain central as a part of this project as it moves forward, particularly for communities in the Historic West End that have experienced the consequences of a past decision. For the last week, NC-DOT has met with me as well as other Council members to discuss the project, giving us an opportunity to ask questions and explain certain rationales. The Mayor has indicated that NC-DOT has agreed to open a Community Resource Center along the corridor. The center will serve as a consistent accessible location where residents can receive information, ask questions, review plans, and engage in ongoing dialogue about the project. This is a critical step towards transparency and sustained engagement. They also have retained help in terms of identifying opportunities to really understand the Charlotte community in general, and specifically issues relating to the African American community. They did what we asked them to do last week, which was to delay issuing

the first draft of the RFP until June 2026, to allow for an extended listening period. We have committed that the four short-listed developers will come directly into the community to meet with residents. This ensures that as design concepts are developed for consideration they are shaped with community input in mind, not after the fact, but during the design process itself.

Secretary Johnson, as the Mayor indicated, will be in town this week to meet with Council members as well as community leaders to listen and learn firsthand about the concerns that we have raised. This provides another opportunity for direct dialogue at the highest level of state transportation leadership.

Lastly, the City Council Transportation Committee will meet this Thursday to receive further updates from NC-DOT reflecting what we hear tonight and this week and determine how we should direct our CRTPO (Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization) representative to clearly communicate Council's concerns and priority as this project moves forward.

In summation, NC-DOT has agreed to strengthen community engagement, to establish a resource center, to delay the first draft of the RFP, to provide direct leadership engagement, and this Council again will provide oversight and direction as it relates to our Transportation Committee Meeting this week, again and formulating clear direction for our City's CRTPO representative.

Lastly, NC-DOT has committed to work with this Council to address community benefits, economic and community investment, continue to explore options for a community benefit and the \$100 million regional bonus allocation. There are a number of issues that we have to do a deep dive over, over the next 45, 90 days to ask a lot more questions, but I think this is a reset, a level setting for engagement from NC-DOT with the community.

Lastly, and then I'll give up the mic. Our relationship with NC-DOT matters, not only because of the I-77 South Expansion, but there are a number of other projects within the City of Charlotte that we're working with them to expand roads in Mountain Island Lake or Steele Creek, and other areas of the City, that we have to have a partnership and a relationship that matters. It does not mean that we won't agree to disagree. I think both options kind of suck, and I'm looking forward to working with the developers that will be engaged in the community about what we can do to minimize impact for communities of color, black and brown, without destroying our skyline, and providing a number of other issues related to pollution and congestion, etc. So, I think they have listened to Council members over the last week and a half. These are small steps along the way. There's certainly a lot more work to be done.

We're not going to solve all the issues of the highway tonight, but certainly I think there's a commitment, at least from my part and in talking to some of my colleagues, to really engage where we can to protect the interest of the citizens of the City of Charlotte on this particular project. So, I will continue this week to listen. I will continue this week to meet with the Secretary when he comes to town. I think we're meeting with him on Wednesday. I look forward to the Transportation Committee Meeting on Thursday, and this is a marathon not a sprint, and so every day counts, every day matters. I certainly have heard loud and clear from the residents of District Two in reference to their particular feelings of it. I agree with them, but as a Council member now, I have to balance the scales, and I certainly stand with my colleagues and my constituents on this issue, that hopefully a better design can come out of the process, because the elevated design from my perspective still does not meet the moment.

**Councilmember Mayo** said I would agree with pretty much everything Malcolm says. He and I work closely on this project, as it affects District One, Two, and Three extensively. I know that NC-DOT has made some progress about not affecting homes in Historic West End. We still have concerns with homes that would be impacted in Wilmore, so that is something that we're continuing to chat about. How do we minimize impact on that neighborhood as well and those residents?

So, we do know that NC-DOT is continuing to work on that design, and they're saying that the current design is about 10 to 15 percent done. It would change based on whatever the firms are actually going to be doing, and that they could have more innovation because of those firms experiences. So, I do look forward to, once some of those firms are getting more detailed into this process, for them to really start having some of those conversations with community members, and they have agreed to do that. NC-DOT has said that the actual firms that would be in competition would meet directly with the communities, and I think that's imperative that they hear firsthand from the communities, and not just from NC-DOT or the consultants that NC-DOT has, so that they can hear directly about the challenges and pain points of the community, so that they can maybe think of some innovation to minimize that.

Councilmember Graham and I talk often about NC-DOT showing their homework, and that is something also that we talked about on Thursday when we met with NC-DOT again, something I would continue to ask them. So, instead of just saying no, we can't go underground, my question has continued to be why not? How much would it cost? I think that we need to be upfront with people in our community about the why and not just say no. So, those are the things that I'll continue to challenge NC-DOT and whoever they're employing to make sure that we are providing our community with sufficient answers and alternatives, because we've seen that there are some challenges with this design, and in order for that to actually change, we need to be having those conversations with people, not just talking to them. So, those are my main big points. I think the community benefits offer an interesting perspective. We know that the \$100 million additional allotment has always been on the table. What I have also challenged NC-DOT is not just to use the Strategic Investment Area Plans for some of those community benefits, but to explicitly work with those affected areas to make those decisions. I don't think that City staff need to be the only people who make the decisions about the community benefits of those neighborhoods that would be impacted, so that would be my other challenge. I think that we have made some progress. I think that we still have work to do, and looking forward the Secretary being here to continue that conversation, so that we can meet the needs of our community. Thank you.

**Councilmember Owens** said so a couple of thoughts on this situation. I am really deeply appreciative of the fact that NC-DOT has moved the RFP deadline. I think it is much more transparent to these neighborhoods that they're not being asked to back eggs out of a baked cake, that they are actually going to be able to offer some input and some insights before we are at a point of no return with respect to the RFP, and I do appreciate that. A couple of thoughts that I have on this situation. I do believe more time is necessary. I'm cautiously optimistic that a lot of the data that I would like to see and that I think the community deserves to see around how much benefit there is to Charlotte with these managed lanes. I believe that exists, because I know that we have been working on this project for a good long time and that the decisionmakers years prior to me made those decisions, and I just am asking us now to be transparent, and again to Councilmember Mayo's point, to show the work.

I would like to appreciate whether we have some additional ability to augment the list of things that CRTPO is asking to have in this contract. As I look at the contract and as I answer questions of my constituents, I don't have the facility with the data to be able to say what success looks like. I don't appreciate what quantum of predictive travel we can envision having with success. How much does it improve the lives of the people who don't take the toll roads, and again, I think 77 North can provide us some of those insights, and I've had folks offer to give me some tours of that. I'd like to appreciate a bit more what comfort we will have, because a 50-year relationship is a very long relationship. What comfort can we have with respect to a transfer of the projects to another provider? I understand that they're also supposed to be providing a number of services along the road for that 50-year period. How much do we have the ability to control that? I'd like to understand our leverage a bit more, so that the benefits then math out to me.

The other part of this that I will say, though, the community benefit side, and I've described myself as a storyteller before, so I hope that you guys will endure me, but I

looked at this booklet of things that are some of the community benefits, and I'm really glad that we're going to have an opportunity to engage. The first thing that came to mind when I saw the community history preservation program, that we will take pictures. Again, this is something that worked on I-26 that's being proffered as perhaps a model for this. It reminded me of when I was trying to get my grandmother to move into assisted living, and I would show her the brochure, and I would say, "Oh, you get to do arts and crafts, and you're going to have daily playtime with a puppy," or whatever, and she would say to me, "But I want to be home. I want to be in my home," and because it was the right thing to do, we moved her to an assisted living, but she was right, she lost a lot in that move. She lost the church that was across the street. She lost the neighbors that used to check in on her. It was not just a house. It was a home. I really am hopeful that with the passage of time and the historic experience that we've had with displacing families, that we understand that at a fundamental level, and are very appreciative of how we're communicating benefits such as an ability to have your own history that you can access online and see pictures of your old house.

The part of this that's probably most exciting to me, and I would love to understand better how it played out here, is on the acquisition fairness program, there's a sentence here that says, "Owners may be eligible for additional mitigation payments to address property values impacted by previous public acquisitions or zoning changes." That's a big sentence to me. That is a sentence that does seem to recognize that sometimes we are going back to the well a second and third time with respect to these communities, and it does acknowledge for me that some families have had generational impact by the decisions that we've made that were in furtherance of the greater good. So, I want to hold space again for a process. I'm hopeful that this 90 days is enough time to beef up our story at a case on how good this is going to be for our community, but also to have legitimate engagement with people and be deeply appreciative of the fact that we are asking people to give up much more than houses. So, I appreciate the opportunity to be heard. Thank you.

**Councilmember Mazuera Arias** said thank you colleagues. Thanks to everybody that's attending today. I do appreciate a good faith delay that the Department of Transportation has issued. I think it's a good step forward. I will say there are some things that are still missing that I think could help us develop a plan that is more people first and community oriented, such as evaluating all alternatives to toll lanes. As I said before, I don't think toll lanes are the answer, and as Councilmember Mayo referenced, rather than having the discussion of well, this can't happen and we can't do this, we should have the conversation of what we can do and exhaust every possible option, and I raise that because it was a central concern raised by nearly 1,300-plus residents in our inboxes, as well as everybody that came out last week talking about this. I also think it is something that has an appetite of majority of Council as we expressed last week. I also think we need to take a step forward of an independent review of these alternatives before further committing public funds to this project.

I agree with Councilmember Graham that we need to also look at the breadth of the design and the impact the design has on residents, and just uplifting the need for an inclusive, transparent and rigorous public feedback comment period. I think it's very essential for us to do that. How does this community center that was stated in the statement, what does that look like? Who are we reaching out to? What does that outreach look like? How are we including every voice, particularly the working parents that work from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., who might not have the luxury nor the privilege or time to come to the Government Center, or come to these Council meetings, or any other public comment period. How are we reaching the folks that fall through the cracks?

I also want to point this out, which is, there are some trends across the Country of elevated highways being torn down, but also we are a city that's moving forward. We just invested and spent a lot of money, private partners spent a lot of money on passing the sales tax that will help invest in our public transportation, and the referendum of the sales tax. For me, it feels like a living contradiction, investing in public transit, but then going ahead and enabling car dependency by elevating a highway. There's, for me, true

concern about induced demand. Adding highway capacity, even toll lanes, can encourage more driving over time, which in turn can undermine our climate goals that we have set out as a city, as a Council, reduce long-term congestion benefits, as well as completely back track last year, which folks did a lot of work on the ground to have this sales tax pass to invest in buses, to invest in rail, to invest in sidewalks and bike lanes, and to make sure that we become a city where we can create 10-minute neighborhoods, yet we are wanting to create a structure that increases car dependency. It just doesn't make sense to me personally, and I just want us to think of ways of how can this project incorporate the goals we have set out as a city through our climate goals, through our public transportation goals, and as well as we all have spoken around this room, recognizing the pain and history of black and brown neighborhoods being divided by highways. There are cities right now working on connecting neighborhoods. Why aren't we talking about that as well, and exploring every viable option, rather than elevated toll lanes? I said it last week and I'll say it again, I sincerely think toll lanes are not the answer. If anything, they divide communities more than unite them, and again I understand the demand our City faces with having 157-plus people move into the region each and every day, but right now I'm concerned about the people that currently live here, not the 157 people that are moving here today or tomorrow or the day after that. We need to make sure that this City is sustainable and healthy and works for the people that currently live here before we can start talking about how it's going to work for the people that don't live here yet. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

**Councilmember Mayfield** said so along the same line as my colleague, I had shared previously I do have concerns. Yet, ya'll know I love to go online, do a quick Yahoo search. I'm not a fan of Google, so I'm keeping Yahoo around. So, when you just do a search on cities that may have removed, when we think about examples of cities that have removed elevated highways, Seattle, Washington, the Alaskan Way viaduct, that was an elevated waterfront freeway, demolished in 2019. We're talking about potentially supporting a long-term investment. Portland, Oregon, Harbor Drive, one of the first freeway removals in the U.S., riverside elevated limited access highway removed, that was removed back in the 1970s, but was replaced with the Tom McCall Waterfront Park. You think about years ago when Debra Campbell was our Planning Director, and we took the trip to New York, and that helped to create part of the design that we now have in South End when you maneuver as far as placemaking. Rochester, New York; San Francisco, California; Boston, Massachusetts; Seoul, Korea; Montreal, Canada; Providence, Rhode Island; Halifax, Nova Scotia, and there are cities right now that are considering and/or planning removal. So, that information, I think, if we're going to have a balanced conversation in community, then all the information should be provided. We need to be looking into communities that have seen the value in removing or disinvesting. We need to know what are the legal implications if this were not to be successful. It was asked earlier, which we know 50 years goes by in a snap, ask any of us that's over 50 and thought we were going to live forever when we were in our teens or early 20s. We thought we had the world in front of us. Fifty got here quicker than we thought. What happens on the back end? How does that actually benefit community?

Again, if we want to create more public transportation options, what would it look like if we did actually commit consistently to that designated bus lane after that Independence investment that split community? We have the real time impact of decisions that were made yesteryear. It will be very difficult with having the history, having all the information to make a very similar decision that's going to impact future generations when we've already seen what happened. What we haven't seen is what could happen if we did it differently. Now, there were some members of the community that asked for a tunnel. That seems to be cost prohibitive to try to do that. Yet, what would it look like really to expand our public transportation system to a level where we get people off the road. I don't have two, three other people to justify being able to ride in the lane for it to be free. My maps personally is set up specifically to avoid tolls. I personally am not going to pay to ride on a road that my taxes already paid for. That doesn't work for me logically, but also, I'm not TSA (Transportation Security Administration). I'm going to go stand in the regular line. So, when I see that we have these toll lanes and they're practically empty, because everyone is still riding on the regular lane. We just drove from Ballantyne to get over here, and we sat in that traffic and we went 10, 12, 15, I

think I got up to 18 miles an hour when the speed limit is 55. It took 45 this morning to get to Ballantyne, the most I got up to was 21; speed limit is listed at 70. So, if we have this traffic and we want to encourage people to condense, to carpool; however, let's get more public options.

Yes, 40 percent has to go to roads. What does that interpretation look like? Could that 40 percent go to repair the roads that we already have that's messed up, because that's going to the roads? We have plenty of roads throughout the City that constantly need repair. To me, it's all in interpretation, once we identify from our legal counsel what can and cannot be done, but everything is in interpretation. So, if 40 percent has to go to roads, what does that look like? I want to make sure that we're having an honest conversation with community and we're not just saying, hey, here's this great thing that we're going to do. People went to community and with a straight face told them that lie a long time ago, where they left out, or what they said in their minds was, community, here's this great thing that we're going to do as government internally, but you're not going to be here to benefit from it. So, that part of the conversation never really made its way to the front. If we know that communities are making the investment to remove, and have been for many years now, why are we considering doing something that we can look to partners and those that we say, when we're looking at best practices, that have already identified this is not a best practice, is this really the direction that we want to go in? Yes, this conversation started more than a decade. I was in my second term in 2014. I still didn't even know how to ask all the right questions yet, much less understand the impact that in 10 years from now, again, 10, 50 years go by very quickly, that we're going to be having part two of a conversation that started over a decade ago, but that long-term impact generational. I don't have any children, therefore, I don't have any grandchildren, but the impact of what we're deciding is going to impact many generations moving forward. We have seen what happened in Brooklyn. We have seen what has happened just in the last 10 years with our policy language. Since it was decided by my colleagues to pause, if we're going to utilize this pause, utilize this pause to get actual information and not just paint a pretty picture for people to co-sign on it.

**Councilmember Ajmera** said first, let me just say that I appreciate NC-DOT, how they're extending the deadline to June 2026 for their RFP. As Councilmember Graham mentioned, the steps that NC-DOT has taken, I certainly appreciate that. I was on a call with NC-DOT with Councilmember Graham and Mayo, and we had a meeting afterwards and we talked about the steps that's being taken to engage the community. I just have one request for NC-DOT. I hope that we are intentional in our community engagement, that it actually translates into meaningful changes and it's not just talking. It's not window dressing. So, what Councilmember Owens said, in terms of the storytelling, that really resonated with me, because we are not just talking about houses here, we are talking about homes that many families have built, and it's the community that they have built around their homes. So, we have to be very intentional about how this community is being engaged, and I believe Sustain Charlotte has done a great job, Shannon Binns, who advocates for connected neighborhoods and walkable communities, has done a great job engaging the community in this regard, and has really organized the coalition of neighborhood leaders, and I hope that NC-DOT looks at that model and replicates that in the community engagement that will truly make a difference in the ultimate design that makes community say, yes, we are on board. So, I look forward to continued work with NC-DOT as well as committee discussion on Thursday, and I look forward to having continued conversations with our community partners. That's all I have. Thank you.

**Councilmember Anderson** said well, first I want to just set a context and say, it's not lost upon me the impact of an interstate on your neighborhood. I grew up in Southside Homes, which is directly beside I-77. There was also a landfill that was on the same parcel as the area that I grew up in, which is even to this day fenced off due to the environmental impacts that Southside Park has on the City of Charlotte, but when I grew up that fence was not around that area. For generations, my family and family friends were impacted, not only by the landfill, but walking across I-77 to what was then Revolution Swimming Pool to learn how to swim. Now, it's a Golf Course Sifford. So it's not lost upon me the historical context of what we're talking about. It's also not lost upon

me that it's 2026 and now as we have this highway that we've had for decades, the congestion is malleable, and also the level of crashes that occur on this corridor also goes against everything that we highlight in our Vision Zero efforts. It's approximately 2.5X the state standard, and it equates to five crashes per day on this 11-mile corridor. So, in this type of situation, we have to assess things through a balanced perspective. We say we have a policy that's called Vision Zero. We don't want to see another lost life, and yet we have this 11-mile interstate corridor that is endangering lives on a daily basis due to a lack of improved infrastructure and design.

So, I was very pleased, as I said as of last week, that the Secretary has decided to come here and listen to the community, not listen to Council members, and he will listen to Council members, but I think it's so important for the Secretary to listen to the community void of Council members, so he can hear directly from you what your concerns are, and that it can be built and baked into the planning that's ahead.

As an engineer, through education and work experience, I also am very pleased with the structure of this project, which is a design build, which effectively means nothing is really designed yet. It's really what we could call an MVP, a minimum viable product, enough to give to some entities to then build and design the best product possible, and the bonus structures built into that process. So, there's basically 10 to 15 percent of this project that is design, which a minimum viable product. So, I feel better about that versus being a design bid effort where it's already designed and we're just bidding it out to the low-cost bidder, or anyone else who could come forward with some other esthetics that would take them across the finish line.

So, having said that, I think we are just beginning. We are nowhere near the finish line. We're nowhere near 25 percent of this effort. We are literally 10 to 15 percent of this effort through, and the community has the opportunity to provide input through the communication center, through a variety of touch points, and there's bonus structures designed for innovative design.

So, I have some hope that that will provide a much better product than the original I-77 product that was developed some years ago. Having said that, and I live here in Charlotte too, the onus is upon Charlotte residents to provide continued input throughout this entire process. We've been in meetings all day long, but as I understand it, North Carolina Department of Transportation, as well as CRTPO have put out statements to say, we're willing to take a pause to listen to constituents, and we want to bake in as much as we possibly can based on your input to hand over to the individuals who would come back with potential designs. I think the work that the community has done has been tremendous, but I also think it needs to be continued. This is not just a quick one-time event. This is a multi-year effort, both in design and in a potential build, and I'll close with this, as we think about Charlotte and the Queen City and where we're going, we know the numbers of 157 people moving to the region; however, the vast majority of those folks moving to Charlotte we have to make sure that we have a balanced approach where we're designing for the future, but also designing for the people who already live here, and to ensure that there is the least amount of harm that's done to the communities that are historic and treasured throughout the Queen City. So, please stay engaged, lean into this process, I'll be doing the same, but it's not a quick endeavor. This is a continued lasting endeavor that's going to take sustained energy and involvement. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

**Councilmember Watlington** said I'd just like firstly to echo the comments of all of Council members, and thanking NC-DOT for extending the community engagement. We understand that it is not a pause, but it is an extension of the timeline of community engagement. The fact that we're having this discussion is a testament, as some have said earlier, to power of the collective and to the power of the community, and I want to make sure, as many others have said, that it is not for naught, if you will. To that end, I do have a couple of questions, but before I ask my questions, I do want to just note that as we think about community engagement, I think it will be very important as we look at the community meetings that are happening, that we also consider with NC-DOT how we can help support real community engagement, if you will. I do think there is

something to be said for highlighting specifically, since we know which parcels are going to be impacted, reaching out specifically to those neighbors. I actually had an opportunity to do a little bit of that myself and talk to some of the folks whose houses are on the map that will be impacted, and none of them even knew that this was coming down the pipeline. So, I do think that if we want to get very tactical, that that'll be the most effective way to go. I look at, for example, West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition has a corridor wide meeting tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. The community engagement for this project is tomorrow at 7:00 p.m., and I'm not sure, based on the information that the coalition has sent out, that they're aware that these meetings are going to be happening around the same time. So, just wanted to lift that up, because I know that everybody wants to make sure that as many folks as possible are able to engage.

I did also want to lift up, to that end, a distinction between Wilmore, Westover Hills, and Revolution Park. Each of those neighborhoods are impacted at Exit 9, and as we are engaging with Wilmore, I want to make sure that we, I say we, the broader we, the team, is clear that Westover Hills and Revolution Park are neighborhoods in and of themselves, and have different neighborhood leadership that would need to be engaged.

We've talked about this before. Nobody here wants this to just be a delay in time, but no difference in outcome. Fundamentally, it comes down to a design problem, and we've got constraints that need to be considered. I think I saw some representatives from NC-DOT. I'd like to understand what truly, truly is within scope as we think about design alternatives. People are traveling on 77, because they're trying to get from one place to another, and if you are traveling on the roads adjacent to it, you know that it is difficult. I'll give an example. If you're on West Boulevard and you want to get to Steele Creek, you can go down 77, you can go down Billy Graham a little bit out of the way, come back to 77, or you can try to go down West Boulevard until it turns into 160. You can get on 485 and go down until you get to Exit 4, and hop back on 160. My point is, people are choosing the interstate, because the feeder roads are not always the most effective. So, I'm wondering if there is a possibility within design to look at how we might leverage some of those other roads, that may be City roads that we would have to work in partnership, to improve those, so that we can get some people off of 77. So, I'm not sure of the format tonight, but if we are able to ask NC-DOT, I just want to understand what's truly within the realm of scope as alternatives could be?

**Mayor Lyles** said I think that we had planned for the question that you've asked to be something that would be done tomorrow.

Ms. Watlington said okay, cool, cool, cool.

Mayor Lyles said and I think that that would be great. One, first of all to show that we want to be in that space, and have the opportunity to hear. So, I think we'll go ahead if that's okay and go with that and get ready for tomorrow.

Ms. Watlington said sure, and so then I'll just put my other question in the room in the hopes that it'll be addressed as well. It's an ongoing question. We've seen some things come to us from various legal advisors. Some that are affiliated with CRTPO and some that are not. I will just want to make sure that we're abreast of at every step what our legal options are, as it relates to our voice as a Council, as our voice as a weighted member of the CRTPO, and as residents of this community who have state representatives as well. So, those are the things that are top of mind for me, but I look forward to the continued discussion.

Mayor Lyles said so, I want to say that it's not tomorrow, it's Wednesday. No, it feels like tomorrow already. So, we'll keep on going, and we'll follow that. Tomorrow, you have to go to another retreat, so that's right, okay, thank you.

**Councilmember Driggs** said so this has been an extraordinary experience. If I were to fault NC-DOT at all it's because they did not recognize the extraordinary sensitivity of that road project at that location. I can tell you CRTPO a couple years ago talked about

the P3. We didn't know. I didn't know, and I take some responsibility for that, but it was just not something that had the kind of prominence that it does now. I do think the good news is NC-DOT has now recognized that their usual process for these things is not going to cut it, and I think a lot of us around the table here a few can take some credit for that as well. So, we now have the potential for engagement and for doing things that aren't the same as happened every time in these projects. On Thursday, in committee, I believe that meeting will be a first step towards formalizing Council's engagement on behalf of residents. We need to understand around the room a lot has been said here, and different things have been said. So, we need to crystalize the negotiation that has to take place with NC-DOT. We need to learn more about what those benefits really are. We need to get satisfied that all of the alternative approaches have been aired, have been recognized. I think that some of the contract bidders can help us with that, because these are companies that've done this work around the Country. They're part of the industry, and so they will be to respond to questions about, well, did this work, have you done that, did you think about this, and so we can get to the bottom of all of those things. It's not too late. Three and a half months for openers is good. Even then, it's not over by any means. There will be at least a year of continuing engagement. So, we need to reach a point by June 2026, where we are comfortable that the things that the community wanted to know and that we wanted to know have been aired, have been addressed, and then we need to see whether the opportunities that still exist warrant proceeding and warrant our support. I believe that the community benefits are something that we need to know more about, because the potential for them is good, and a lot of people could end up better off, it's possible, as a result.

I will say that historically, when a lot of the hurt originated around the invasion of black communities, the way it was done was brutal. They were basically just driven out. There wasn't compensation. The difference is, this time the community has power and is exercising that power, and that's an important difference. Therefore, I'm still hopeful that we can achieve an outcome that responds to the very real transportation needs on that road. It's a dangerous road. It's a dirty road. The interchanges are bad. So, I hope we can get the benefit of this very large investment, and at the same time, reach an outcome that the community will feel recognizes their needs and sensitivity. Thank you.

Mayor Lyles said thank you. I think that everyone has had an opportunity, so I'm going to turn it over to James Mitchell, Mayor Pro Tem.

**Councilmember Mitchell** said Mayor, thank you, and to my colleagues, I think this is why this was so important that we added it to our retreat schedule, and thanks to staff, Julia, for making this possible. I think we all agree that it's going to take collaboration and partners, and we do have them in the room today, so I just want to recognize, will everybody here from NC-DOT staff, will you please stand, the one that spent the last three days with us, hearing from us, will you please stand and be recognized. Thank you. Then, the young lady who's going to head up the community engagement that I think out of 12, you heard loud and clear, community engagement is important. So, all of those staff members with DeAlva Wilson Agency, please stand, and her staff please stand. So, thank you for being a partner.

So, let me just recap, and I think Council members know that we just got a very big week, but what's important when the Mayor reached out to the Secretary, and he made his commitment, I just think it shows how important Charlotte means to him, and how important he wants us to truly be a partner and to do the right thing. So, we will have community meetings starting tomorrow evening with the Secretary at 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Some of your neighborhood leaders have already been contacted. You'll be getting an email, and then the City Council members will meet with the Secretary on Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. and at 11:30 a.m. Then, more importantly, this has been referred to our Transportation Planning Committee meeting, and that is at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday.

So, I say that to say, as everyone has mentioned around this table, community engagement, community engagement, is so important, and so we are so thankful that here we are and there is so much planning together, talking together, listening together

that we're going to do. So, Mayor, with that I want to thank everybody for being here, and I want to see everybody at what time tomorrow morning?

Everyone said 10:00 a.m.

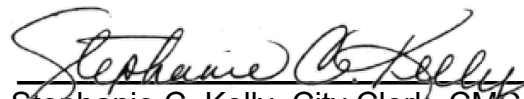
Councilmember Mitchell said don't even try it. 9:00 a.m.

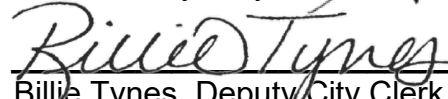
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### ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayfield, seconded by Councilmember Driggs, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

  
Stephanie C. Kelly, City Clerk, CMC, NCCMC

  
Billie Tynes, Deputy City Clerk, NCCMC

  
Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk

Length of Meeting: 8 Hours, 57 Minutes  
Minutes completed: April 22, 2026