

The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for Committee Discussions on Monday, March 4, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Councilmembers present were Danté Anderson, Tariq Bokhari, Ed Driggs, Malcolm Graham, Lawana Mayfield, Marjorie Molina, and Victoria Watlington.

ABSENT: Councilmembers Dimple Ajmera, Tiawana Brown, Renee Johnson, and James Mitchell.

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ITEM NO. 1: COUNCIL COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

Mayor Lyles said today, on the first Monday of each month, we have the Council committees tackle their issues and referrals that they have that are helping us move towards policy positions in our organization. So, today, we had three committee meetings, and so we are going to hear from each person. It is a time for the Council to ask questions, as I think most of us have watched all of the meetings during the day, but the ability to ask each colleague what else do they need to know, what else do they think could be added that would make the conversation more substantial or reflect the entirety of the Council. So, I know that we have several Council members that were absent today, and so we will proceed with this, and I thought we might start off by, instead of asking Ed to go first, the first shall be last and the last shall be first, and especially since it's right on the tip of your tongue. So, I want to ask if we can begin with our Housing and Safety Committee report out, and again, the highlights of your discussion or the questions that you have of the Council.

Councilmember Watlington said today, we had a wonderful meeting. I just want to say, the staff that supports the Housing, Safety and Community Committee, ACM (Assistant City Manager) Reenie Askew, ACM Shawn Heath, Director Rebecca Hefner, and I should not have started naming names, because now I'm like, oh my God, Julia Martin, Warren Wooten, and our wonderful data folks, Andrew and Jackie. They're doing a great job, they really are. It was exciting to see the updates that we had today, because we really are moving in a tangible direction on the things that we have said are important to us. Councilmember Mayfield kicked us off with the faith-based development initiative that she's leading, and certainly I won't steal her thunder, so if you want to add to it, that would be awesome, but that's something that she's been working on. I know that the Mayor also had received some information and was reviewing it and assessing its fit for our City, and it looks like we've got some opportunity to come alongside our faith-based community to provide housing, and if not housing, wraparound services. It's really about how do we create a space for our faith-based community and partners, to meet some of the needs in the community that we couldn't just do from within the City walls. Did I do you justice? Awesome. So, we look forward to an update from that. There is going to be a small, not large, stakeholder group that will be working on some of those projects and bringing them forward to us. So, that was the first thing.

We built on that momentum by revisiting our community safety framework referral, and that, I have to tell you, I'm so excited about. They have been working so very hard since January 2024, and they brought us back, not only like the basis data, if you will, for what we're looking at, and really understanding how our crime involving youth is shaped in our community, where it's happening. We learned, what I thought that was most alarming in the discussion, was that the top 10 percent of folks are really committing almost half of the crime that results in arrest. So, that, on the one hand is very alarming, but on the other it does almost help to wrap our arms around, what are we really dealing with. I think about Councilmember Bokhari, who really started that conversation about let's really focus on the faithful few, I'll say it that way, and I think that we've got the data now to really have those conversations. We heard from Mecklenburg County and some of our Neighborhood Services, Dr. Stewart, and others, about the Office of Violence Prevention work, and how that marries up. We heard about ongoing research that we're doing in partnership with UNC (University of North Carolina) Charlotte, to really understand where we can plug into the system to interrupt crime as it happens, and it

was just overall a great opportunity to hear about the strategy. There's going to be so much more coming down the pipeline as we dig deeper into it, but if you weren't able to catch the meeting, please definitely tune in, because it was very meaty in that discussion, and I look forward to what comes back.

Then, finally, as another follow up to our Annual Retreat this year, we reviewed our performance management framework, and how the goals that we pointed out, tie to metrics. I think we're well on our way with that as it relates to Great Neighborhoods and Safe Communities. One of the things that is particularly important to our committee, is making sure that we tie these measures to output metrics. I appreciate the distinction between the city and the community measures and understanding our sphere of influence. I think with that, we can also just take another look and making sure that what we have as in-process metrics, our behaviors are matching the output. So, for example, we know that we can control where we invest and how much we invest. Then, it would be great if we could take it to the extra step and say, "Did that deliver the result that we thought it was going to deliver?" So, very impactful committee meeting today, and I look forward to the great work of our staff next time. Any questions or comments?

Mayor Lyles said thank you very much, Ms. Watlington, and your entire committee for that discussion. We've got so much work to do in this area, and you guys are tackling it with a lot of really strong and achievement-oriented goals, so thank you. Alright, so our next committee would be Jobs and Economic Development.

Councilmember Graham said yhe Jobs and Economic Development Committee met earlier today at 12:00 p.m. We had three agenda items. The first one was an update from Danielle Frazier on Workforce Development update. She provided the Council an update on the \$9.1 million previously approved by Council late last year. She also talked about the selection of the partner to assist in the developing of the Workforce Development strategy that [inaudible] over the next six months. It was her first presentation to the Council, so I think there's a lot of excitement and enthusiasm around the work that she's doing. Since she was first retained by the City, some six or seven months ago now, I think she started in August of 2023, and so she has hit the ground running, a lot of input from Council members individually, as well as collectively as a unit today. I had the opportunity to meet with her week before last for about an hour and we kind of discussed strategies and techniques and things that she's working on, and gave her the feedback that I received from a number of Council members and committee members. So, I thought that was a really, really good report and update.

Secondly, and probably more importantly, we received the referral from Horner Sports and Entertainment and took action. The Council unanimously referred the staff recommendation back to the City Council for review and consideration. Again, we talked specifically about the change in the revenue sources, sponsorship branding, to the new capacity in tourism. We compared the original 2022 proposal to the new 2024 proposal, talked specifically about MWSBE (Minority, Women, Small Business Enterprise) and Workforce Development initiatives, given by Danielle Frazier and Steve Coker, who was there as well. We talked specifically about City use days. One of the things I think that we should mention is, we talked specifically about the sponsorship and the district, and we wanted to kind of get some clarification and talk about the Uptown Transit Station and where that fits in. Obviously, they're two separate things, but that deal kind of went dark. So, we talked specifically about where we were with that in relationship to the new deal. So, that was on the table for just information for the Council as well as the community.

More importantly, we talked about two things that we kind of adopted the staff recommendation, but also one of them and the staff to go back before we vote at the end of March 2024, on two scenarios. One, the practice facility, as you know, there's a \$30 million investment that the City's putting in that facility, a facility that we don't own, and we would like to see some language dedicated to community engagement and community usage of the practice facility as a part of the contract. We asked the City Attorney and Ms. Dodson to have conversations over the next 30 days with the Hornets in reference to that. We also asked them to go back and review and revisit the language

in the original contract that talks about City days and City utilization of the facility itself, the arena itself, and we asked staff to go back and have additional conversations about that language. That language is kind of old language, and we just want to make sure that it kind of reflects where we are today. So, in talking with the representatives of the Hornets after the meeting, I think they're open to having both those discussions over the next 30 days prior to the Council making a vote. Obviously, we don't expect major earth changing on those things, other than putting it on the table that, obviously, the practice facility, specifically, there's an opportunity for community engagement, AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) usage, youth basketball usage, etc., they seem amenable to that for sure.

The second one might be a little bit tougher in reference to this kind of talking about the language in reference to the City utilization of the arena itself. It should be noted that we're not taking advantage of the days that we have now. So, I'm not sure where that conversation needs to be had, whether with the CRVA (Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority), City Manager's office, etc., but obviously, there are a number of community usage for the arena that we should be taking advantage of, and based on what I'm hearing right now, that we currently aren't. The last agenda item, we were not able to get to, Mr. Manager, simply because of time restrictions, but a great meeting for both the Workforce Development as well as moving forward the Spectrum contractual obligations to the Council for your consideration.

Councilmember Driggs said I just thought it would be worth adding to your remarks, Mr. Chair, that we wanted to send a message to the team that we appreciate their presence here and their investment. I think everybody on the committee made the point, and we did not want them to think that because we were studying the terms of the transaction, that we had any reservations. So, I wanted to send a strong, affirmative signal. My own view was that we had kind of two things to think about. One was a more quantitative one, all the numbers that were flying around, the parking and the this and the that. So, when you kind of compile those numbers, and we saw a very good slide during the thing which did that. It was based on one that I did, which is why it was good, but it did pull all that together. Basically, the bottom line is, that you have kind of a wash on the money stuff. So, we're donating \$30 million for the practice facility, we're getting back some parking from that, and when you walk through all of that, you have a small money issue. Then you look at the qualitative stuff, and the relationship with the team, the large investment they're making pursuant to these modifications, and the outlook for the area around there, which is hard to kind of put in money terms but is a big plus for us. So, anyway, I think we all agreed that we certainly wanted to move forward. We wanted the staff to proceed, and we look forward to hearing more about the term sheet and the particulars of it. So, I just wanted to add that, Mr. Chair. I thought it was a very good discussion today, and I was actually quite pleased about the outcome.

Councilmember Mayfield said thank you, Councilmember Graham for the update. I was hoping, since I asked the question regarding the days, and also can we figure out why days have gone underutilized, meaning did we have any requests out there that were denied. I was hoping that information would have been shared with your committee. If I'm understanding correctly, we know that some days have gone underutilized, but we don't know the why.

Mr. Graham said we don't know the why, and that's something I think, Ms. Dodson, we talked a little about, even before last week's meeting, when we talked about this in early February 2024, in terms of why these days aren't being utilized, whether or not it falls within the jurisdiction of CRVA requests, etc. We will use this next 30 days really to kind of drill down to kind of get a lot more specifics before the final vote on that question itself, as well as the language. The language, from my perspective, is really restrictive. I mean, it's kind of one-sided to the Hornets, and it relies on their good faith.

Ms. Mayfield said right, and yes, I'm not a fan of that. So, I appreciate that we're going to get some more information, because I know just from conversations, and I'm quite sure my colleagues have had conversations, just between Councilmember Mitchell and myself, a number of individuals that have reached out trying to get access for a space.

So, it would be nice to know what does that look like. I also am going to reiterate, before we give any impression, as far as yea, this is an all go, I want to ensure that our Legal Department has the time to really go through this, because there is conversation. Some members of Council have said it on more than one occasion that this is a wash. It isn't necessarily a wash. So, I want to make sure that our legal team, before Council gives an impression, has a chance to really go through this to make sure that it's not one-sided, and that we can look to the community over the next 10 to 15 years, and to the best of our ability, we gave them a really good deal. We have had conversations where Council has approved language, then when it comes time for the negotiations, some of the those negotiations have been. "Well, that is not what Council said we had to do." We're not in the room for all of the legalese. I would really like for us to take that breath to let our Legal Department actually go through to make sure that we are, to the best of our ability, getting as much for our community as possible outside of just having access to a suite during events.

Mr. Graham said yes, we talked a little bit about that as well, in reference to making sure that, I think the way I phrased it in my notes is, the devil is in the details, and that we're requesting that the City Attorney make sure that all I's are dotted and T's are crossed in reference to the deal. So, we did talk about that. I'm confident that he heard that message as well.

Ms. Mayfield said thank you so much.

Councilmember Molina said I want to echo the sentiments that we had a great discussion around the Hornets today. I think it was pretty vibrant around the specifics and the exchange for the numbers and etc. Councilmember Mayfield, I just want you to know that I asked that directly to our Attorney, because I don't really know or understand the exchange, but I wanted to make sure that we had clarity. We did discuss that. I want to let you know that we did bring that up to make sure that that's going to be a part of this process as well, to make sure that we cover that base. So, that was good. Actually, I even liked the input that the Chairman, and even the Mayor Pro Tem, brought into the conversation about what you said at our last meeting with the usage days. So, I think we're all hoping to get some specifics around that, so that we can better understand that and share that with the public as well. So, I thought that was great input.

Councilmember Bokhari said I can provide a pretty wholistic answer as to why we historically have not used dates in all of these facilities, because even before Council, I had interactions with it and I saw it. So, whether it's the Panthers Stadium or the Hornets Arena, or any of these things, the Memorial Stadium, I think that the simplest way to understand it is, we, collective us, county, whoever is in what deal, get a certain number of days. Beyond the scheduling parameters, we can negotiate and help get those on the calendar, and they can waive the fee for the facility itself, but these are massive facilities. If you're in the game where you can actually program something like that, the fee waiving is not the relevant part. It's the staffing of it, it's the ticketing, it's the show, it's all the things you're going to do. So, this isn't like a community park where we want this many days for barbecues. It's major events. So, the only way to really use something like this, is in our recruitment tools of events to town where that becomes another arrow in our quiver, to say, "Well, we can waive this \$35,000 or \$40,000 or \$45,000 fee," but that still requires them to spend millions of dollars. So, I think we should all frame our minds around, with facilities this large, what can actually be used and why historically it hasn't happened, because we have to put emphasis behind those things.

Mr. Graham said yes. So, we're talking high level, you're absolutely correct, but we're also talking low level, to like graduations and stuff like that, which doesn't require concessions and a whole lot of workforces as well. So, I think the devil is in the detail how you figure all that out, but you're absolutely correct. The deals that we were talking about were, where one in particular was a large international event, which would cover those types of scenarios, but we have to have the dates first. So, point well taken.

Mayor Lyles said alright, let's see. Now, I think that ends that report, and so we'll now go to Transportation.

Mr. Driggs said so, we had a couple of topics today. The first one was the update on CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System). I should mention by the way, our members are myself as Chair; Ms. Molina, Vice Chair; Mr. Graham, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Watlington. We got introduced today to the new Senior Executive from National Express responsible for overseeing the operations of our CATS bus service. You'll recall we transitioned from the old management company to this one, and are looking forward to some significant improvements from the issues that we were dealing with in the last couple of years. So, his name was [inaudible], and I'm afraid I didn't get the last name.

Mayor Lyles said Nigerian.

Mr. Driggs said Nigerian [inaudible] 00:22:17, I think, yes. In any case, so he talked a little bit about the credentials of National Express as an international company, the experience that he brings from postings in other countries, as well as other cities, and then gave us some quick impressions from his first month on the job, was impressed the personnel that he met, the professionalism of the staff. He also said that the plan that we have for equipment acquisition is kind of on target. He said the battery technology is not fully proven, and therefore, we need to be judicious about moving ahead with those, and the hybrid buses in our last order were the right thing to do at that time. So, it's good to hear his buy-in on that.

We also heard, in relation to CATS, that the bridge inspections that were part of the remediation process, following the difficulties a year or two ago, are almost complete. There are, I think, five or six bridges left to be looked at, and those are basically waiting pending approvals and coordination with the railroad to gain access to them. No issues were discovered at the other bridges that couldn't be remedied essentially immediately, so nothing has come from the bridge inspections, and also mentioned that the maintenance of the trains, which was also part of our remediation process, is ongoing. About five of 20 trains that were delayed on their maintenance, that had not had the 600,000-mile maintenance they required, have now been done, and the remainder will take a year or two. They're in a process of being shipped out and brought back, but the trains that are in operation are all the newest generation trains that are not past due, and therefore, we are able to maintain a current schedule, a full-service schedule, with those newer trains. The trains that haven't been serviced yet, among the old ones, are not currently in service. So, I like to emphasis on occasions like this, the trains are safe. So, we hear some of these issues about maintenance and catching up with the maintenance. The trains that are operating are not behind in their maintenance and they're running on schedule. So, I think those were the high points on CATS.

We then had an update from Planning on two issues. One of them was the Community Area Plan process, and we got what I thought was a very useful description or briefing on that process that I think the full Council also needs to hear, talking about what activities there are, the outreach that goes on, and then what the Community Area Plans themselves will actually look like. The description that we got was, this is going to be a document of up to 50 pages, that summarizes a lot of research that was done in each of the 14 districts that are defined for the City, and thereby, creates a profile for those, and that guides prioritization for planning. In conjunction with that, the Policy Map is going to be updated, and there will be a first draft of Policy Map updates put in circulation in the next few days, in fact, for review. The plan is to then have a couple of other updates to the Policy Map reviewed in roughly three-month intervals, I think, before the Policy Map is effectively updated, i.e., becomes binding, with the adoption of the Area Plans, and this is the alignment process that we were told to expect. The Area Plans will not modify the UDO (Unified Development Ordinance), and the recommendations they have for infrastructure do not commit money. So, these are really just a reference for each of the districts, and then an update through the Policy Maps to the some of the planning priorities in them. I think that's reasonably good, Mr. Manager, unless I left something out there.

The other thing we talked about was, the staff pointed out to us that the conservation development areas had become a feature in the UDO that was being used in 90 percent of our by-right redevelopment in order to achieve greater density. Basically, this is a provision that says, if you have a certain amount of open space, that you can have smaller lot sizes. What people have done and what some of the developers have done, is found a way to kind of technically meet that open space requirement and put more units on the site, but not actually satisfy the goal that we had to have actual valuable open space. So, the quality of some of the developments is not good. The staff is trying to move quickly in order to rectify that and to close that loophole. So, they told us that they are actually going to file a text amendment sometime in the next few days, and it will do things like, be more specific about what open space requirements are, and prescribe where your frontage can be, not have these little alley roads, and there were a few other features that they mentioned. I think this is an important adjustment that we should make, because it is in fact a loophole, and some of the stuff that's being done as a result is really not friendly for people who live nearby, nor does it lead to the kind of development we had in mind. So, we're going to see that come along pretty quickly. I think we'll get a briefing for full Council in the next month or so, and the staff would love to see us act on that and make those changes effective in the near term.

We also talked about the performance management framework and looked for the goals that had been assigned to our committee, what particular things the staff is thinking about measuring in order to get a step closer. They didn't say exactly what the measurements are and so on, but these were the things where they intended to establish observable metrics that we could track, in terms of measuring our progress. I took the opportunity to emphasize the fact that, after our last meeting, the word sort of went out that we were backing away from our Vision Zero commitment, and we absolutely are not. The only conversation that we had at that meeting was that we ought to have a sort of measurable near-term goal, so that we can determine whether we are doing well or not. Just saying that our goal is to be zero is aspirational, but it doesn't give us operationally, as we move forward, a basis. So, that's all that was about, and it somehow got translated into we are backing away from that commitment, and I just wanted to emphasize the fact that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, doing this makes us more accountable. We're demonstrating that we actually are achieving results when it comes to Vision Zero. That's all I have. I don't know if a committee member would like to add anything.

Mr. Graham said there's a lot of good work being done at CATS. I probably can make a list of 26 items that CATS is working on, from the transit to buses, to the Interim CEO (Chief Executive Officer), to the Advisory Group. I mean, a lot of work is being done. I think the most important thing for me, is just making sure that we don't get complacent on reporting out, especially the work. The federal report that we said that we would do, and we report out, that we need to make sure that that is getting out to the public. It may satisfy a number of issues, especially, I think it's going to be a good report. Where are we with it? Maybe that's the question.

Marcus Jones, City Manager said sure. Thank you, Councilmember Graham. So, two reports from the FTA (Federal Transit Administration). The one that's on the maintenance has been wrapped up. The one that's more operational, they are on the final stages of that. What I will say is that I believe the first one will be something that's positive. I don't want to get out in front of the FTA. I believe what Mr. Cagle said this morning, is that the next 30 or so days, he expects to get the other report, but absolutely, once those reports are finalized, we'll get them out, because you may recall, that was one of the things we tried to do to make sure, in terms of accountability, that the highest level is reviewing CATS. Also, it's important to note that, that also was outsourced, so there's an independent review that's happening of CATS on both the operations and the maintenance.

Mr. Graham said I think that's really important to articulate to the public consistently, so that those who are listening and watching what we're doing in our transportation space, know that that is still a high priority for the Council and the community, and that we're doing what we said we would do. That may speak to a wide variety of audience that

we're speaking to both locally and regionally. Then, in terms of the reporting back to Council, I mean, Mr. Driggs does a wonderful job, so I'm not trying to tell him how to run his committee, but at least even a 10 second update, while we're all there as members of the Transportation Committee, in terms of where we are on those things would be very helpful, not only to the committee, but also to, I think, the community.

Mayor Lyles said so we know that the MTC (Metropolitan Transit Commission) meeting is always held a week before this one, and they had the same discussion, and I think Mr. Cagle said the same thing, is that the report is almost complete. It is outsourced from the FTA to a private sector for both efforts, both the operations, as well as the maintenance. So, I believe that everyone is waiting for that. As soon as it can be released, I think that we should have full open access for everyone in the community, especially those, and even more importantly, those that ride our buses and trains. So, I think that's going to be really a good point, Mr. Graham.

Mr. Driggs said so, I want to say, Mr. Graham, for one, your questions were noted. So, we'll make sure at the next committee meeting, that we allot a little more time. I also wanted to mention the joint MTC, City Council working group is not disbanded, so we intend to reconvene. There wasn't a lot for us to talk about. The things that we had put in place were ongoing. We will meet again to talk about the FTA report. We also intend to follow up on risk management, and a whole program of recommendations that Mr. Bokhari made on risk management, so that we not only solve the problems of the past, but we avert problems in the future. Thanks.

Mr. Graham said I think CATS is doing a great job under the Interim Director. Like I said, there's so many moving parts, so many projects, but certainly didn't want that to kind of get left in the pile. Thank you.

Ms. Molina said I just want to highlight also the bus lane on Independence. We're starting the work on the bus lane on Independence Boulevard, and I, and as well as a number of community members who've expressed it to me, are very excited about that. So, I just want to highlight that, and let my colleagues on Council know, if you hadn't already heard, that we're going to have that opening back up, so pretty cool.

Mayor Lyles said okay. Alright, thank you everyone. I think that gives us every committee report from this evening.

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ITEM NO. 2: CLOSED SESSION (AS NECESSARY)

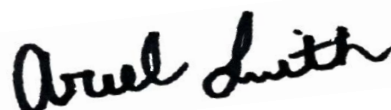
No closed session occurred.

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ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayfield, seconded by Councilmember Anderson, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.
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The meeting was adjourned at 6:36 p.m.



Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk

Length of Meeting: 0 Hours, 36 Minutes
Minutes completed: November 5, 2024