

**A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON CITY COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2022. Scheduled for 7:00 pm. In the City Council Chambers City Hall, Mount Vernon, New York.**

\*\*\* Due to the ongoing pandemic this meeting was held in the council chambers, with virtual participation via ZOOM and CMVNY Facebook. The meeting was not closed to the public however, the maximum number of in-person occupant was limited \*\*\*

**PRESENT:** Danielle Browne Esq., Cathlin Gleason, Edward Poteat

**ABSENT:** Lisa A. Copeland

**PRESIDING:** Derrick Thompson, President

**OTHERS:** Tanesia M. Walters, Deputy City Clerk, Elias Gootzeit, Legislative Assistant and Brian G. Johnson, Corporation Counsel

Council President Derrick Thompson called the meeting to order and provided house-keeping rules, including in case of emergency. He then asked councilman Poteat to lead the council in the Pledge of Allegiance. Council President then proceeded to the Public Speakers session of the evening (listed below as public comment).

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Raymond Copeland** - *residing at 236 Bedford Avenue, appeared in person.* Mr. Copeland voiced his concerns about the increase of taxes. He hoped that being here tonight speaking about his concerns about the increase of taxes will convince the council body to not raise taxes. He owns several properties in Mount Vernon, and he is concerned that he will not be able to keep his properties if his taxes are raised.

He hopes that the city finds other ways out, instead of coming to the homeowner every time. The City should seek out grants, and other means as a form of bail out instead of raising taxes every time. Mr. Copeland stated that he was deputy commissioner of DPW under Mayor Ernie Davis, and it was one of the hardest jobs he ever did. It was hard to get the DPW employees to represent the City properly, especially as far as cleanliness was concerned.

He advised that DPW must pick up the garbage properly and dump it properly. The truck must be equipped with a broom and extra bags for spillage and to clean up any mess. The trucks should not drive away and leave the mess, they must clean up any spillage from a burse garbage bag. The trucks are old and filthy, the city's name on the trucks are barely visible because of the filth. Other city trucks are clean, and the city's name is visible. The mechanics that works on the trucks are not the most competent.

Also, a lot of parts that are ordered for the trucks are not being fully monitored and inventoried to keep track of the parts. This can cause the parts to go mischievously missing, and the erroneous creation of invoices for parts. He tried to get an office set up and a policy in place for parts and inventory but was unsuccessful in doing so. He stressed that it's imperative for the City set up a parts department at the DPW lot and assign a person to oversee parts. He proclaimed that he was not successful in getting that done because there were employees that have been with DPW way longer than he was, that formed a clique to prevent the set up of a parts department.

He is very pleased to see that the revamp of Memorial fields is in progress. He would like very much to see the other side of Sanford Blvd., coming up from the Bronx get some attention as well. He lamented that from the Bronx line all the way up to fifth Avenue, is a disaster, and that the property on the left is a dumping site. He stated that it doesn't make sense that the Memorial Fields side is getting a face lift while the other side is going down the drain. The property on the Fifth Avenue side should be cleaned up and use according to the code. As far as it goes now it is being used as a heavy commercial zone and he is sure the code does not support a heavy commercialized zone.

**Council President Comment** - Council President Thompson informed the public that because the meeting started late, he will afford the public an opportunity to speak even if they did not sign up to speak. He asked repeatedly if anyone would like to speak but receive no response, therefore the meeting proceed as standard.

The council body responded to Mr. Copeland's concerns.

## **REFERRAL SESSION**

**Roll Call** administered by Deputy City Clerk Tanesia M. Walters

## ***HIGHLIGHTED ITEMS FROM THE REFERRAL PACKET***

### **FINANCE AND PLANNING**

*Read by Councilman Poteat*

**Item No. 5 (Tally Sheet- on agenda)**- Resolution of the City of Mount Vernon City Council Declaring its Intent to Serve as Lead Agency to the City of Mount Vernon pursuant to the NYS Environmental Review Act (SEQRA) Notice for purposes of Reviewing the zoning Petition and Development Application for Library Square.

Councilman Poteat advised that the action the body will be taking is to start the review of the SEQRA process for the application, the action that is not taken is an approval of this project. Councilman Poteat emphasized that the council body is starting the conversation which will be months long conversation, where there will be deep community input on what happens on the site and the council body looks forward to this process.

**Item No. 12** (*Tally Sheet- called for*) – Architectural Review Board Expedited review of Qwest Towers. Councilman Poteat advised that he wants to make clear that the council body’s intent is not to look back on what other previous council members have done, the intent is to be clear that the council body processes are strong in this process. There were a few recommendations during the expedited review process, where the building commissioner will need to make sure that what came from ARB is in the plans. The council wants to be extremely sure that this is indeed the case. So, this is called for now to make sure that the building commissioner understands that those recommendations needs to be in the plans.

## **LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC WORKS**

*Read by Councilwoman Browne*

**Item No. 1** (*Tally Sheet- for information*) – Council woman Browne advised that this is for changing the name of Columbus avenue. We are researching if we have the authority to change the name as this is a county street. If the council indeed has the authority to change the name of the street the council will open the conversation up to the community so the community can participate in the naming process.

**Item No. 11A** (*Tally Sheet- on agenda*) That is a request from the City Marshall to use the City Hall Rotunda for the viewing of Chairman Lafayette.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY AND CODES**

*Read by Councilwoman Gleason*

**Item No. 4.** (*Tally Sheet- for information*) – Council woman Gleason advised that this is a letter from written to the Council by the Uniform Fire Fighters Association regarding fire station 4, located at 9-11 Oak Street. This letter documents the various issues associated with fire station making it uninhabitable.

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES AND ACTION THEREON**

**To the Council:**

The **LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC WORKS** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

Item. No. 1 An ordinance authorizing the body of the Honorable Reginald A. LaFayette to lie in State in the City Hall Rotunda

Item. No. 2 A resolution for Honorable Reginald A. LaFayette

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Danielle Browne, Esq., Chair*

*Cathlin Gleason, Co-Chair*

*Received, passed and filed.*

Passed by the following vote:

**Ayes:** President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat

**Nays:** None

**Absent:** councilwoman Copeland

**To the Council:**

The **PUBLIC SAFETY AND CODES** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

Int. No. 3 An ordinance authorizing Community Service Aide, Jeannine Justich, a one-year leave of absence. (12/15/2021 – 12/15/2022)

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Cathlin Gleason, Chair*

*Danielle Browne, Esq., Co-Chair*

*Received, passed and filed.*

Passed by the following vote:

**Ayes:** President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat

**Nays:** None

**Absent:** councilwoman Copeland

**To the Council:**

The **FINANCE AND PLANNING** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

- Item No. 4     A Local Law to override the tax levy limit established in General Municipal Law Section 3-C.
- Item No. 5     A resolution of the City of Mount Vernon City Council declaring its intent to serve as lead agency pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA”) notice for purposes of reviewing the zoning petition and development application.
- Item. No. 6     An ordinance authorizing and directing the Comptroller to Refund an overpayment of 2021 taxes to “Pro National Title Agency”

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Edward Poteat, Chair*

*Lisa Copeland, Co-Chair*

*Received, passed and filed.*

Passed by the following vote:

**Ayes:** President Thompson, councilmembers; Browne, Gleason, Poteat

**Nays:** None

**Absent:** Councilwoman Copeland

**To the Council:**

The **HUMAN RESOURCES Committee** recommends for **ADOPTION** the following entitled legislation:

There are no items on the agenda for Human Resources

**OTHER COMMENTS**

Councilwoman Browne informed the public that she is backing the sentiments of Council President Thompson in that the Council Body wants to be as transparent as possible. She advised that there were a few emails about Tally Sheets and work session discussion not being readily available before the work session. Councilwoman Browne advised that residents should be

advised that the Tally Sheet and referral materials is readily available on the City's website for reference.

Councilwoman Gleason expressed gratitude to the council and the city clerk's office for honoring former Chairman Reginal A. Lafayette.

Councilman Poteat expressed the same sentiments for the honoring of former Chairman Reginald A. Lafayette. He emphasized that for Chairman Lafayette to commit forty years of his life as a public servant, he may not have always got it right, but his commitment and consistency needs to be lauded.

In closing Council President Thompson in remembrance of former Chairman Reginald A. Lafayette read the former Chairman's funeral service arrangements.

Council President Thompson also acknowledged the passing of his cousin Wayne Cowens Sr., born and raised in Mount Vernon, he asked to please keep the family in our prayers. He stressed that we are living in difficult times so it's a necessity that we are kind to each other because tomorrow is not promised to anyone.

The council body stood for a moment of silence in remembrance of former Chairman Reginald A. Lafayette and Wayne Cowens Sr.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Tanesia M. Walters, *J.D., M.P.A*

Deputy City Clerk