



**JOURNAL of the PROCEEDINGS
of the
CITY COUNCIL**

CITY OF CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

Regular Meeting – Tuesday, January 16, 2024

at 7:00 P.M.

Council Chambers – City Hall – Charleston, West Virginia

OFFICIAL RECORD

Amy Shuler Goodwin
Mayor

Miles C. Cary II
City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER*

The Council met at 7:00 P.M., for the second meeting in the month of January on the 16th day, in the year 2024, and was called to order by the Honorable Mayor, Amy Shuler Goodwin. The invocation was delivered by Councilmember Burka, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilmember Jones. City Clerk, Miles C. Cary II, called the roll of members and it was found that there were present at the time:

CEPERLEY	BURKA	
FERRELL	COOK	FAEGRE
HOOVER	GIANOLA	HAAS
KERNS	JENKINS	JONES
MOORE	KING	
PHARR	OVERSTREET	PEPPER
SALANGO	ROBINSON	RUBIO
STEELHAMMER	SNODGRASS	SOLOMON
	TAYLOR	MAYOR GOODWIN

With twenty-four members being present, the Mayor declared a quorum present.

All absences were excused by the City Clerk per Resolution No. 582-21.

Pending the reading of the Journal of the previous meeting, the reading thereof was dispensed with and the same duly approved.

STATE OF THE CITY

Madam President, Members of Council, Members of the administration, to our more than 700 amazing City employees, community leaders, local business owners, and to the nearly 50,000 residents of this City we love...

I'm excited to share with you the State of the City as we look ahead in 2024.

At the beginning of every year, however, it is also customary to look back—to see what we've accomplished as a city.

It's an opportunity for us to be reminded of our successes, to adjust where we need to improve and, most important, set elevated goals that will challenge us and encourage us to keep our momentum going.

THE HOLIDAY—IT FEELS DIFFERENT!

While the holiday trees are gone, the decorations are tucked away until next year, and the ice has melted on the skating rink at the GoMart Ballpark—it is worth reflecting on one of the best holiday seasons we can remember in our Capital City.

Tens of thousands of folks packed our streets, local businesses, and restaurants from Black Friday to New Year's Day for Holly Jolly Brawley, the Christmas Parade, the Holiday Village at Capital Market and Light the Night.

At the ballpark, alone, more than 120,000 folks from 40 different states joined the festivities for an unforgettable and spectacular new holiday season staple in our Capital City.

During all these events I consistently heard from folks that—this City not only looks but feels different.

That's because it IS different.

We can see the changes that have been made over the past several years, and that “feeling” that I keep hearing about – and that I feel too – is the excitement and energy that comes from progress, and potential: progress that we've made, and the potential for so much more to come.

Yes, millions of bright lights can surely brighten a City. But it's more than just holiday events that make a city vibrant.

It's the more than 5,000 flowers, 12,000 tulip bulbs, hanging baskets, and 30 new trees we planted this year.

It's the 300 art installations around the city.

It's investments in critical infrastructure—like roads and sidewalks.

It's investments in our small businesses and community parks.

It's investments in key events like the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta.

And most important, its investments in our people—increased salaries and better equipment—so we may keep pace and deliver the essential services our citizens deserve.

FINANCIAL STRENGTH

We also invested time to better understand the path we needed to take to secure a better future for our city.

Five years ago, we started by saving money to ensure we could not only withstand but thrive during tough times.

We created and continue to maintain the largest rainy-day fund in the City's history.

The fund started with \$4 million [in 2019] and currently sits at almost \$17 million.

In addition, our team made deliberate and critical financial decisions to change our pension funding methods, pension investment, OPEB plan changes, and debt management thus allowing us to increase the City's financial position by nearly \$270 million.

These steps have afforded us the opportunity to not only have long-term financial clarity but also begin making significant investments in the City's future.

Just as we have experienced substantial growth of our tax base in the past five years, the City is also experiencing increases in revenue — further emphasizing our robust and expanding local economy, continued growth and development, and a notable increase in both visitors and small businesses.

In addition, overall Governmental Revenue is up 25%, B&O tax is up 16%, and Sales Tax collections are up 30%.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT & JOBS

Because of our continued investments and our savings, we are making Charleston a place where businesses want to put down roots.

With hard work, and good, consistent communication, we have welcomed new restaurants, shops, and education hubs to downtown—in addition to new companies including Worley, a global company headquartered in Australia and their 170 employees.

We are currently working with a national company getting ready to break ground on a \$65 million facility that will bring hundreds of people downtown every day.

NEIGHBORHOODS & HOUSING

We are making critical investments in our neighborhoods, too—not just in roads, sidewalks, and parks—but also continuing to double our efforts on dilapidated structures, leveling 530 structures in the past five years.

If we are going to invest and if we are going to grow—housing must be part of the long-term revitalization plan.

The Charleston Land Reuse Agency's work is helping to jumpstart redevelopment.

The CLRA recently adopted programs to incentivize home renovation and new construction.

I am confident this direct financial support will help 2024 be the biggest year for new and fully renovated single-family homes in Charleston in decades.

We are also helping existing property owners take ownership of vacant side lots beside their homes—helping them build equity, have room for that swing set or driveway, and reinvest in their own neighborhood.

The work of addressing abandoned and vacant properties is hard and slow, but in 2024 we will

see this hard work pay off.

POLICE

We have invested in our places and spaces and our people.

We have invested in our police officers and our police department.

And now we are seeing the return on that investment because we are seeing significant positive results.

We have increased the quality of equipment our officers use over the past few years—an investment of close to \$4 million.

Early last year, the Charleston Police Department worked with our federal, county, and local partners, to takedown a drug trafficking organization which stopped a state record amount of methamphetamine, as well as other dangerous drugs and weapons, from entering our community.

This operation, along with another in September, has made major impacts in our community. These great results, combined with diligent patrol tactics, quality investigations, and various community-based programs and projects are key to Charleston seeing low violent crime rates and high solve rates.

But we must remain steadfast in pursuit of keeping our communities safe.

CPD recently created a new report module which allows folks to report a crime directly through its website.

We are aggressively recruiting the next generation of CPD officers. Just last month, Interim Chief Dempsey and I swore in 6 new officers. Next week we will swear in 3 more Officers. Recruiting new officers, partnering with other law enforcement agencies, and working directly with our community members are all essential to continuing this trend of lower crime in our community.

In addition, we are taking steps toward building a new state of the art public safety center—one that will provide our dedicated police officers with the modern tools and space to help us continue to create an environment where businesses want to invest, and people want to visit and live.

FIRE

We've also invested in our fire and EMS team—over the course of the past five years—increasing their compensation, fixing a long-standing holiday pay discrepancy, and purchasing close to \$10 million in new equipment.

This year, we're assessing all eight fire stations. Simply put—some need a little investment—and some need quite a bit more.

Being a firefighter and EMS worker is unlike any other job in our city. While most city offices are open during set times—our fire department stands ready 24/7. Our fire and EMS professionals literally sleep and eat at the office. It is critical our employees who pull these long hours and do this strenuous work get a good night's rest and a good meal so they can be ready when we need them. And we need to provide them with better accommodations.

In addition to addressing the working and living conditions at our fire stations—we need to focus more on their personal health. They put us first in times of need—now we need to do the same.

That’s why I am asking City Council to support building a new fire headquarters—one equipped with training tools to help them learn and grow as first responders, and a space where they can work on their physical and personal health.

I will ask Council to invest ARPA funds to help fund these critical public safety investments.

CITY EMPLOYEES

Last year we made a commitment to invest in our City employees.

I asked City Council to work with me to ensure no full-time employee in the City of Charleston makes less than \$15 an hour. Last year we took a big step towards that goal, and this year we’ll move closer still.

I’m asking, again this year, that we continue in our commitment to our hard-working City of Charleston employees.

I’m also asking that we increase the salaries of not only our civilian employees – but also those in our police and fire department.

By strategically focusing on recruitment and retention, we ensure the sustainability of our efforts to provide robust city services.

SPORTS TOURISM & ENTERTAINMENT

Last year we proved that we are a national player in attracting large-scale sports competitions. We hosted three consecutive weeks of USA Youth Table Tennis, bringing over 200 athletes from 27 different countries to our city for the 2023 International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Pan American Youth Championships.

We hosted the U.S. Men’s Volleyball National Team for the 2023 NORCECA Men’s Continental Championships which featured teams from seven countries and over 200 athletes.

And we announced Charleston will host the USA Cycling Pro Road National Championships for the next five years. The 2024 event will draw Olympians, World Tour professionals and rising cycling stars just two months before the Olympics. In fact, the winner of the Elite Men’s and Women’s Time Trial events—right here in Charleston—will automatically qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Sports tourism can continue to be a significant economic driver for our city, and with the development of the Capital Sports Complex will truly transform our region.

Our investment combined with the \$5 million initial commitment from the Kanawha County Commission and several million from federal partners will jumpstart our ability to capitalize on a \$40 billion industry.

We’ve not only proven Charleston is a sports town—but that we are an entertainment destination.

The Charleston Sternwheel Regatta generated over \$37 million in total economic impact and brought in 220,000 people to our downtown.

This major event, combined with the success of events like FestivALL and Multifest, highlight our ability to attract people from across the country.

This year the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center (CCCC) had a record setting year with tickets sales, attendance and food and beverage earnings. In fact, in one week alone the CCCC hosted three sold out shows and these events generated—in one week—more than \$250,000 in direct wages to local event workers, and packed our hotels, restaurants, and breweries.

These results make very clear what we have known all along: tourism equals jobs.

We changed the way we operate our facilities – and now we are booking bigger and better shows and we breaking our own venue records.

We listened to our residents and our visitors and created events that have exceeded their expectations.

MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

We’ve also upped our game at the Municipal Auditorium. We went from making less than \$400,000 in revenue at the Municipal Auditorium to realizing close to \$2 million in revenue.

We know that this venue, its size, and the demand for top-tier talent is strong, but we also know this venue needs to be improved.

What we now need to do—much like we did with the Coliseum and Convention Center – is to create a new venue that best fits our market so we can secure a greater return.

Smart investments in what we know works in our city will continue to be our center focus.

FOUR NEW PROJECTS

We’ve done the necessary work to bring us to this moment.

We’ve saved.

We’ve made investments that are working —and are paying off.

We’ve grown our tax base.

We’ve booked the shows. We’ve hosted the events.

We’ve listened to our residents and our visitors.

We’ve learned what we need to do to move Charleston forward.

And our vision is to keep investing—and keep building.

4 major projects

0 new taxes

1 pivotal moment

We can build the Capital Sport Center and take advantage of one of the fastest growing sectors in our economy—sport tourism.

We can build a brand-new Municipal Auditorium to capitalize on Charleston becoming a major entertainment hub.

We can build a new state of the art public safety center, make the much-needed improvements to our fire stations, and build a new Fire/EMS headquarters so that we can take care of those who take care of us—and make our community safer.

We can make all four of these major investments happen without creating a single new tax on

our residents.

I'm looking forward to working with City Council on that plan, and the hard work necessary to make these projects a reality.

CLOSING

Charleston is a city on the rise—not only do I hear these comments daily—but I can see proof of that positive momentum.

Soon, we will see more than \$200 million in investment being put toward new projects within a half mile of where we are in City Hall.

It's because of our work, together—this City Council, this Administration and this community pulling in the same direction.

And, yes, while there is always room for growth, we are starting to see it already.

Businesses are moving into empty storefronts, visitors are filling our hotels, and our families are playing in our parks until dusk.

While we still have challenges, the change in the way things “look and feel” in Charleston didn't happen overnight—and didn't happen by accident.

Now, for those of you keeping track at home—you've heard me say the word “invest” more than 25 times.

And, I've said the word invest for good reason.

We have been diligently preparing for this pivotal moment for close to five years.

Now is the time to capitalize on our momentum.

Now is the time to invest in our future.

Thank you to our council, and to our community for helping us realize our potential.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

1. Kenny Mathews – Represented American Friends Service Committee, and spoke about critically about several subjects.
2. Hollis Lewis – Spoke about First Choice Services
3. Iris Sidikman – Represented Women’s Heath Center, and spoke about overdose and HIV rates.
4. Dirar Ahmod – Spoke about Gaza ceasefire.

CLAIMS

1. A claim of William Carlyle Calvert, Charleston, WV; alleges damage to vehicle.
2. A claim of Svinivasan Narasimhan, Charleston, WV; alleges damage to vehicle.
3. A claim of Jerry A Nelson, Charleston, WV; alleges damage to vehicle.

PROCLAMATIONS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

None

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Councilmember Jenkins, Chair of the Council Committee on Finance, submitted the following reports:

1. Your committee on Finance has had under consideration the following resolution, and reports the same to Council with the recommendation that Resolution No. 921-24 be adopted.

Resolution No. 921-24 - Authorizing the Mayor or City Manager to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Charleston and Mountain View Memorial Park Company, attached hereto as exhibit A, relating to the transfer of assets, including both real and personal property, from Mountain View Memorial Park Company to the City of Charleston and to take all necessary steps to complete the closing of the asset transfer.

Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the Council of the City of Charleston, West Virginia:

That the Council for the City of Charleston authorizes the Mayor or City Manager to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Charleston and Mountain View Memorial Park Company, attached hereto as exhibit A, relating to the transfer of assets, including both real and personal property, from Mountain View Memorial Park Company to the City of Charleston and to take all necessary steps to complete the closing of the asset transfer. The City Council specifically acknowledges that the Spring Hill Cemetery Park Commission has recommended the execution of the Memorandum of Understanding and transfer of the assets. For the avoidance of doubt, City Council specifically authorizes the Mayor or City Manager to take any legal actions necessary to transfer, close, and consolidate the perpetual care trust currently managed by Mountain View Memorial Park Company to the City of Charleston and into the Spring Hill Combined Endowment Fund, Inc.

Councilmember Jenkins added that the resolution is to transfer a portion of Mountain View Memorial Park to the City. Proceeds from sold plots in this area will be equally split among the City Mountain View Memorial Park Company. Any corresponding trust funds will also be transferred to the City.

Councilmember Jenkins moved to approve the resolution. Councilmember Ceperley seconded the motion. With members present recorded thereon as voting unanimously in the affirmative, the Mayor declared Resolution No. 921-24 adopted.

2. Your committee on Finance has had under consideration the following resolution, and reports the same to Council with the recommendation that Resolution No. 922-24 be adopted.

Resolution No. 922-24 - Authorizing the Mayor or City Manager to enter into a contract with Brewer and Company of West Virginia, Inc. to repair and replace standpipes at the Cinemas Parking Garage in the amount of \$51,900.00, where the price was determined through a competitive bidding process.

Be it Resolved by the Council of the City of Charleston, West Virginia:

That the Mayor or City Manager can enter into a contract with Brewer and Company of West Virginia, Inc. to repair and replace standpipes at the Cinemas Parking Garage in the amount of \$51,900.00.

Councilmember Jenkins added that the standpipes in the Cinema's parking garage were tested and deemed inadequate by the Charleston Fire Department. They will need to be replaced and/or repaired.

Councilmember Jenkins moved to approve the resolution. Councilmember Ceperley seconded the motion. With members present recorded thereon as voting unanimously in the affirmative, the Mayor declared Resolution No. 922-24 adopted.

3. Your committee on Finance has had under consideration the following resolution, and reports the same to Council with the recommendation that Resolution No. 923-24 be adopted.

Resolution No. 923-24 - Authorizing the Finance Director to establish special revenue fund 027 as the Opioid Settlement fund to be used to receive and expend any amounts received under the West Virginia statewide settlement agreements with various pharmaceutical companies relating to opioid-related claims made on behalf of the State of West Virginia and its political subdivisions, and amending the purpose of fund 097, CARE Office fund, created by resolution 748-22, adopted on December 19, 2022, by removing the provisions related to receiving and expending of opioid settlement funds.

Be it Resolved by the Council of the City of Charleston, West Virginia:

That the Finance Director is authorized to establish special revenue fund 027 as the Opioid Settlement fund to be used to receive and expend any amounts received under the West Virginia statewide settlement agreements with various pharmaceutical companies relating to opioid-related claims made on behalf of the State of West Virginia and its political subdivisions, and amending the purpose of fund 097, CARE Office fund, created by resolution 748-22, adopted on December 19, 2022 by removing the provisions related to receiving and expending of opioid settlement funds.

Councilmember Jenkins added that fund 97 was established prior to guidance for the State Auditor's Office to accept opioid and other various funds for the CARE Office.

Councilmember Jenkins moved to approve the resolution. Councilmember Ceperley seconded the motion. With members present recorded thereon as voting unanimously in the affirmative, the Mayor declared Resolution No. 923-24 adopted. There is now an official recommendation that there be a sperate fund for opioid settlement funds.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

1. Municipal Court Report to City Council Month Ending November and December 2023.
2. Municipal Court Report to City Council Month Ending December 2023.

NEW BILLS

None

MISCELLANEOUS/UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

REMARKS BY MEMBERS

1. Councilmember Snodgrass stated that not naming a new official Police Chief after several months was a disservice to the City and Officers. She added that the City only has 151 certified Police Officers, and they are budgeted for 173.
2. Councilmember Moore thanked the Street Department for clearing the roads. He expressed concern that so many stores were leaving the mall.
3. Councilmember Kerns stated that she has been doing more research in the Middle East and regrets not supporting members of the community. Councilmember Kerns added that she is in support of a ceasefire.
4. Councilmember Faegre stated that there are many resources for the unhoused in Charleston. She stated that she hopes individuals in need of harm reduction that visit the Women’s Health Center can be given transport to Health Right. Councilmember Faegre added that everyone on Council wants a ceasefire, and have sent a letter to the appropriate lawmakers in the Federal Government.
5. Councilmember Steelhammer stated that the warming centers have been operating, and urged Councilmembers to visit them.
6. Councilmember Ferrell stated that there are plenty of program and opportunities for people who want to change their lives.
7. Councilmember Pharr stated that all of the buildings that have been converted into apartment complexes have been very successful, and many tenants had moved out to purchase homes. She added that the pre-lease numbers are well above the national average.
8. Councilmember King stated that he supports the Police Department and the acting Chief and Deputy Chief. He added that the he is glad the Mayor is taking time to choose the right Chief.

ADJOURNMENT

City Clerk, Miles C. Cary II, called the closing roll call:

YEAS: Burka, Ceperley, Cook, Faegre, Ferrell, Gianola, Haas, Hoover, Jenkins, Jones, Kerns, King, Moore, Overstreet, Pepper, Pharr, Robinson, Rubio, Salango, Snodgrass, Solomon, Steelhammer, Taylor, Mayor Goodwin

NAYS:

ABSENT: Annie, Burton, Minardi

At 8:06 p.m., by a motion from Councilmember Ceperley, Council adjourned until Monday, February 5, 2024, 7:00 p.m., in Council Chambers at City Hall.

Amy Shuler Goodwin, Honorable Mayor

Miles C. Cary II, City Clerk