

**April 21, 2015  
Special Meeting**

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD April 21, 2015**

A Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hopewell, Virginia, was held Tuesday, April 21, 2015, at 5:45 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, Municipal Building, 300 North Main Street, Hopewell, Virginia.

PRESENT: Brenda S. Pelham, Mayor  
Christina J. Luman-Bailey, Vice Mayor  
Arlene Holloway, Councilor  
Anthony J. Zevgolis, Councilor  
Jasmine E. Gore, Councilor  
K. Wayne Walton, Councilor  
Jackie M. Shornak, Councilor

Mark A. Haley, City Manager  
Thomas Lacheney, City Attorney  
Cynthia Y Ames, City Clerk

**ROLL CALL**

Mayor Pelham opened the meeting at 5:45 p.m. Roll call was taken as follows:

Mayor Pelham	-	present
Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey	-	present
Councilor Holloway	-	present
Councilor Zevgolis	-	ABSENT (arrived @ 6:53 p.m.)
Councilor Gore	-	present
Councilor Walton	-	present
Councilor Shornak	-	present

**CLOSED MEETING**

Motion was made by Councilor Walton, and seconded by Councilor Shornak, to resolve to convene into closed session for discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body (City Attorney, City Clerk), in according to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1).

**OPEN SESSION**

Council convened into Open Session. Councilors responded to the question: "Were the only matters discussed in the Closed Meeting public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements; and public business matters identified in the motion to convene into Closed Session?" Upon the roll call, the vote resulted:

Councilor Gore	-	yes
Councilor Walton	-	yes
Mayor Pelham	-	yes
Councilor Shornak	-	yes
Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey	-	yes
Councilor Holloway	-	yes

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Mayor Pelham opened the special meeting at 7:30 p.m. Roll Call was taken as follows:

Mayor Pelham	-	present
Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey	-	present
Councilor Holloway	-	present
Councilor Zevgolis	-	present
Councilor Gore	-	present
Councilor Walton	-	present
Councilor Shornak	-	present

**PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Prayer was led by Charles Dane, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**PH-1. Public Hearing: - City of Hopewell Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Staff Presentation and Proposed Budget**

Mr. Whitaker opened the public hearing by first giving a presentation of the proposed 2015-2016 Fiscal Year Budget: Good evening, The budget is shown, was advertised in the paper as required by the Code of Virginia and if you notice on the presentation, the general fund's budget is going to increase by \$1,975,000 and this will be discussed later in the presentation. Social Services as shown and CSA are state mandated services. The self-insurance fund [unintelligible] pay the City's property liabilities. The schools budget as shown in total is reduced by \$77,888. This is a net of state and federal funding cuts and the increase by the City as shown of \$176,000. So the cuts by state and federal government is exceeding the amount of additional funding by the City of Hopewell by \$77,888. The funding that's discussed by Council last week, the funding of \$176 will be increased to \$390,000. The city also generates income from sales tax in the amount of \$2 million. The other local taxes that the City also collects and this will be on permits and business licenses and other fees. The total revenue generated from the City from the state is \$8 million. Federal revenues, as you can see, is a very small portion of the City's budget at \$254,500. There is a transfer annually from the water sewer fund in the amount of \$884,500. Total miscellaneous revenues collected by the City is \$3,676,800. So the total reoccurring revenues, \$46,865,000. And a lot of these numbers will repeat themselves as we get deeper and deeper into the numbers themselves. So, if you will, this page represents if you will, the weekly, biweekly or monthly paychecks that citizens have and this is the City's paycheck, if you will, on an annual basis. And these are the reoccurring revenues that the City is planning to collect. On the next page, what I'm showing is revenues versus expenditures and again, the total local revenues collected by the City is \$38,551,370. The state revenues of \$8,059,130. Federal revenues again, very small, \$254,500. Total revenues \$46,865,000. So this is just the same information just broken down in different ways, showing different ways in the budget. The reoccurring expenditures and again these are the expenditures that we are expecting to reoccur on an annual basis and this would include salaries and benefits, utilities, and the payment for debt service. So the reoccurring expenditures are budgeted at \$46,865,000. Included in the budget are some one-time expenditures for capital projects, bringing the total expenditures to the \$48,032,000 to match the total revenues. The total revenues of \$46,865,000 are reoccurring and

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one-time revenues is showing at the bottom of \$1,167,000. So the Council is this year going to use fund balance to pay for some capital projects, major capital projects that are planned for the City. So on the next page and again, we're going to talk about the fund balance or the savings account of the City. If you look at the last column to the right, you'll see that the beginning fund balance has \$4,527,800. And this is the ten percent that's required by Council as voted some years ago to maintain this fund balance as a part of their annual budget process. And what this actually also does is allow the City to maintain cash for emergency situations and also to have cash flow to pay its bills. Because taxes are collected in June and December and a lot of debt service is paid in the month of July, it is important that Council have or the City has dollars on hand at the end of June in order to pay its debt service come July the 15. Additional fund balance available is projected to be \$2,900,377. The total fund balance projected at the beginning of the year of \$6,937,857. The use of fund balance is projected to be \$767,000. And the reason this number differs from the \$1,167,000 is because this is coming from the general fund fund balance and the \$400,000 is coming from the fire equipment reserve account. So at the end of the year, it's projected that the fund balance, ten percent, will have \$4,686,500 and the fund balance available will be \$2,133,377. And the total fund balance as noted will be \$6,170,857 and this is a decrease from the beginning of the year of \$767,000. You will see fund balance as a percentage of general fund balance will be 13.2% at the end of next year. And just to kind of go over an analysis of the revenues between the current budget and the proposed budget. The current budget has reoccurring revenues of \$45,278 and the proposed budget starting out for '15 will be that same dollar amount as the base. We did know that we're going to recognize some additional revenues in the upcoming fiscal year. We're going to forecast additional real estate tax revenues of \$260,000, personal service corporation revenues of \$229,000, we're projecting a decrease in the personal property tax revenues of \$288,000. We're projecting an increase in machinery and tool tax of \$1,321,100. And we're projecting state highway maintenance funds increase in the amount of \$116,000. And we're projecting various revenue sources, all the remaining smaller ones to actually decrease by about \$51,100. And again, bringing our total reoccurring revenue projections to the \$46,865,000 as mentioned on previous slides. So as you can see in comparing FY2015 to FY2016, there is a difference of \$1,587,000 in new revenues that the City will recognize in the next fiscal year. But I will remind Council that as a part of the current year's budget in providing salary increases to City employees as well as school employees, City Council voted to use one-time revenues of \$779 from the fund balance, the general fund fund balance. And keep in mind when you take money out of fund balance, it is a non-reoccurring revenue. It is a one-time source of revenue from your savings account, if you will. So in order to fund the salaries that were budgeted in the current fiscal year, it will be necessary to use the \$779,000 of the \$1.5 million immediately to replace or to match a reoccurring revenue with a reoccurring expenses. So the net of those two is about \$800,000 of new revenue, if you will, that is free or available for new expenditures. And we're going to talk about how that \$805,000 will be used on a different page. And as mentioned previously, the use of general fund balance for FY16 is \$767,000 and the use of the fire equipment reserve of \$400,000. So the total difference between last year's budget and this year's budget is again \$1,975,000. So now I want to talk a little bit about the expenditures that will be occurring over the next year and how the process of the budget process actually went. So the process actually starts back in the fall, late fall. It started back in November and the process was to actually send out budgets to each department. And each department actually has a major say in what their budget request is going to be for the coming year. So each department is actually distributed a budget packet and then that packet is submitted to the Director of Finance or myself. And what I do is prior to the process is I look at three years of actual expenditures and then look at the request of the department to make sure that their request is not an overinflated request and it's in line with historical spending. And I also look at the six months of actuals for the current year and compare that to the request as well. Then I compile the budget that's submitted by all of the departments and submit to the City Manager, the Finance Director's budget recommendation. And then I sit down and review the budget overall with the City Manager and we then at that point, if I have cut departments budgets because I didn't think their request was in line with historical spending costs, departments have the opportunity to request additional funding once they meet with the City Manager and myself and justify the increase in funding request. So that is how the

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process actually works. So there is all inclusive, all parties are actually included in the budget process throughout the process. And at this point, we're at the point where the City Manager has made a recommendation to Council. And Council at its pleasure can increase or decrease the recommendations of the City Manager. So for 2015/16 the program priorities was to maintain the integrity of the financials, housing and neighborhood assistance or code enforcement, investing in employees, the public safety building, the regional communication system, storm water drainage utilities, MIS software, recycling and the Regional Phase II Project, economic development, teen and family resource centers. Some of the highlights from the budget included balancing the budget again by matching reoccurring revenues with reoccurring expenditures. Included in the budget is a two cent increase in the real estate tax rate. Also included in the budget is funding for schools in the amount of \$176,400 and this is for three reading teachers. Included in the budget is fully funding CSA, the Comprehensive Services Act, which again is mandated by the state and that is an increase in funding of \$191,000. Police career development, which was started in the current fiscal year and will continue into the next fiscal year is budgeted at \$32,000. Fire career development funding is still pending further discussion. The bus route project funding of \$216,000. Funding of three new City positions for a net of \$99,876. There are no COLA increases budgeted for City employees in the upcoming budget year. Overall, the funding for most departments in the City was held at their 2015 funding level. There were some increases for some departments as justified by the historical costs and those departments actually received some increases but overall most departments were held at the 2015 funding level. Included in the budget is a healthcare cost savings. The city is changing providers in the coming fiscal year and they are recognizing some cost savings and some of those savings are being passed onto the employees and some of those savings are being maintained as additional revenues for the City's budget. Also included in the budget is debt service for the communication system of \$197,500. So on the next slide, it's showing the new positions that were proposed funded and it's also showing the proposed positions that are unfunded. So the proposed positions that are funded is one firefighter position, with a salary of \$38,594, benefits of \$10,804 for a total of \$49,398. Also included is an EMS service building clerk and the total for that is \$52,788. A CSA Coordinator, again that's the Comprehensive Services Act administrative assistant, which is currently part time and we are requesting that that position be converted to a full time position of \$47,000. And if I could just go back one moment to the building clerk, which is listed at \$52,788, there is a footnote at the bottom of the page that currently we are contracting out that service and the current cost of contracting out that service is \$27,000. It is predicted that once we bring those services in house, our collection rate, which is currently at about fifty percent should increase to somewhere between 75 to 90 percent thus generating additional dollars for the City. Currently we are generating about \$350,000 and we're projecting that bringing that position in house, we will generate or add to our earnings an additional \$150 to \$200,000 and possibly more dollars. So those additional revenues should more than pay for the position itself. The CSA administrative assistant position, which is budgeted at \$47,990, that position is currently in the budget as a part time position and the funding for that position is currently \$23,300. So the net of those three positions that shows the total funding of \$150, portion that out the current amount that's in the budget at the present time, it will be an increase in the budget for those three positions of about \$98,000. The positions that were unfunded and requested by departments was the finance department requested an accountant/budget analyst. There were also three additional firefighter positions that were requested. There were two street maintenance specialist positions that were requested. And there was a parks and rec youth coordinator that was also requested and unfunded as part of the budget. So on the next slide, what I'm attempting to do on this slide is just give you a crosswalk between the reoccurring revenues from 2015 to the reoccurring revenues for 2016. So of the \$808,000 that you see as the net change from the net of revenues that the City will recognize in 2016. Of that \$808,000, \$514,000 will go immediately to pay for debt services. \$176,400 will go to fund three school positions. The increase in CSA funding of \$191,000. Healthcare correction for insurance and although we have a budget savings as shown on the next line, there was an under-budget of healthcare costs in the current budget year. Also included in the current year budget is the comprehensive plan of \$100,000. It was listed as a reoccurring expense for the current year and it will not be there as a reoccurring expense in 2016,

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therefore it is a reduction. And just overall from all of the other departments, there's a cost savings of about \$183,000. And this is mostly through turnover in staffing with new staff coming in as salaries that are less than staff that are retiring. So there are some cost savings that are recognized in some of the departments. And again, the net change of the reoccurring expenses over last year or the current year's budget is \$808,000. So the proposed 2016 reoccurring expenditures is \$46,865,000 and this matches the proposed reoccurring revenues. And again, as mentioned previously, the one-time capital projects proposed funding of \$1,167,000 to come to the total advertised expenditure budget of \$48,032,000. So the next slide, this kind of shows a little bit about the funding for schools from 2012 to 2013. And it shows that the adopted budget for schools operating costs in 2012 was \$11,000,500.

Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey asked \$500,000? Mr. Whitaker replies This increased \$11,000,800 in 2013. And in 2014, the schools adopted budget was \$12,420,000 for an increase over the prior year of \$620,000. In 2015, the adopted budget was \$13,100,000 and this is an increase of \$680,000 over the previous year. The current year budget for 2016, proposed at \$13,276,400 is an increase that's mentioned previously of \$176,400. For a cumulative over the past four years for an increase to the school budget of \$1,776,000. This does not include the debt service that the City pays on behalf of the schools and in 2013 I listed it as not available. As Council will recall, I started my employment here with the City in December of 2012 and I have not been able to find that particular document yet. So [unintelligible] at some point, I hope to actually populate that with the numbers as I find them. But in 2014, the debt service paid on behalf of schools by the City was \$2,083,243. And in 2015, \$2,057,623. In 2016, that debt service is going to grow to \$2,482,621. And this is some additional information as it relates to the schools and the City's budget. So that pretty much covers all of the general fund budget. The next part of the slide starts speaking of capital project's budget. So the capital projects budget, the revenues that are generated in the capital projects budget of \$171 and the proposed, projected revenues for 2016 is approximately \$2,875,500. The budget includes \$62,000 in grant funds to pay for a vehicle that's listed below. And if those grant funds are not received, that vehicle will not be purchased. There's a transfer from the general fund to the capital projects fund to support debt and also other capital projects. And also there is a transfer from the general fund for fire. And here I have it listed as \$160,000. The original request that was advertised in the newspaper showed \$400,000. And the \$400,000 was for the outright purchase of a fire apparatus. But instead of purchasing that apparatus, the City is actually looking into leasing two fire trucks for an annual cost of \$160,000. And that cost will come out of the equipment reserve account that has been set aside for fire and vehicle purchases. The major projects that I was speaking of earlier that came to \$776,000 includes the Gateway Project, the East Broadway Bridge and the Hummes Ross traffic signal. And that's \$167. And if you notice that these items again are one-time expenditures and they are not reoccurring costs. And the \$167 was an agreement that was entered into by Council. So this project is coming to fruition in 2016. And if you notice below that, there is a transfer to the general fund. Half of these projects is matched by grant funds and the other half is actually matched by the City. And again, I'd like Council to be mindful these are one-time expenditures versus reoccurring expenditures. So once you pay it, it's done. You don't have to pay it in future years to come.

So and to talk about the expenditures in the capital project fund, debt service is at \$3,975,000. IT equipment to purchase servers, PCs and other equipment at \$50,000. Wage and salary study at \$40,000. And just on down the list. You can read through these, they are relatively small. But what I want to bring to your attention, the sheriff requested four vehicles at \$33,500. And at whatever point you see yellow, there is a change from the department's request to the City Manager's recommendation.

The police department did request two vehicles for admin at \$23,000 and those will not be funded in 2016. Police requested four vehicles for patrol at \$140,000 and all of those are to be funded. Fire has that truck again, as we mentioned, the two trucks as we mentioned previously at \$160,000. Machinery and equipment fire hose at \$4,000. Communication equipment at \$8,500. Additional machinery and equipment at \$22,000. Vehicle at \$30,000. And again, the actuals here, the \$52,000 and the \$30,000 are the grant funds. So if the City does not receive the grant funds, these two items will not be purchased.

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Pavement repair as the budget previously historically for the City at \$350,000. Streetlight and improvements at \$20,000. And all of the requests for public works have been eliminated from the 2016 budget and as you can see that those items include the dump truck, the low bore trailer and on down the list. And again, just to show the major projects, the total costs of the major projects we spoke of at revenues earlier, these are the offsetting expenditures for the Gateway Project, the East Broadway Bridge and for the traffic signal. Requested from recreations was some renovations to Mathis Field, \$56,000. Reduced from recreations request were two vehicles. And also reduced from their budget and not highlighted in yellow is the Atwater Park restroom. And the other projects were included in the budget. So if you look at the total projected revenues or projected expenditures is \$6,713,450 and the revenues are exceeding the expenditures by \$14,050. And Madam Mayor and members of Council, that concludes my presentation for this evening.

Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey: Mr. Whitaker, I've had questions and I was wondering if you could explain to the public the approximately \$31 million on the regional wastewater treatment, could you explain that? Mr. Whitaker: Certainly, that's going to be on the, well it's advertised in the paper. So the \$31 million actually is a major project taken on by the City and these are mostly grant funds. And the funds that are not grant funds are actually funds that are actually paid by the five major industries in the City of Hopewell. The City's contribution to this project is actually very, very small. I don't have the exact dollar amount but it's probably under \$100,000 if my memory serves me correctly. This is actually an \$80 million project. And about \$55 million of this project is coming from state funds. The other about \$25 million is coming from the major industries in the City of Hopewell. Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey: So, this is the nutrient reduction that was required by law? Mr. Whitaker: That's correct. Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey: A project that's required by law. In reality what's coming out of the local budget is around \$100,000, not the \$31. Mr. Whitaker: It's a very small dollar amount. Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey: It's just the way, it's the transfer that gives the impression that the City is forking out \$31 million. Mr. Whitaker: Unfortunately, as part of the local budgeting process, in order for me to cut a check, the dollars have to be appropriated by Council. So although the dollars are coming from different sources, it still has to be appropriated as part of the Council's budget. It's just like the state funds that we're receiving in the amount of about \$8 million. Those dollars although coming from state have to be appropriated by Council in order for me to cut the check to use those funds. Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey: Thank you because that is very confusing. A lot of people were under the impression that the City was paying that amount to, directly. So thank you for that explanation. Mr. Whitaker: And the \$48 million, it's a multi-year project. So it's projected that about \$40 million or \$31 million is going to be spent in 2016 fiscal year and the remaining of it will be spent in 2017 fiscal year. So although it's an \$80 million project, it is spanning over two or three years.

Councilor Shornak: This might be a question for Mark. Mark, on the amended agenda under public hearing, it says that we would receive citizens comments and approve the budget on the first reading, there's no way that we can approve the budget tonight, so was that, I thought we were going to approve the budget on the 28<sup>th</sup>. MR. HALEY: That's the second reading on the 28<sup>th</sup>. It requires two readings. Councilor Shornak: Oh, okay. Mr. Haley: You can pass it on the first reading tonight and still make adjustments between now and the 28<sup>th</sup> but it requires two readings, like an ordinance. Councilor Shornak: Okay, what if we don't pass it on the first reading tonight?

Mr. Whitaker: May I provide a point of clarification, Madam Mayor? Mayor Pelham: Yes, go ahead. Mr. Whitaker: Yes, just a point of clarification and not to contradict the City Manager but the requirement of state law is that we advertise the budget and have a public hearing and the budget can be adopted by resolution as opposed to a second hearing. And the City Attorney can direct me if I'm speaking out of turn. So we will actually just hold the public hearing this evening and not a first reading but to actually have an adoption of the resolution of the budget at the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mayor Pelham: All right, thank you.

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Mayor Pelham: Okay, any other comments? Councilor Walton? Councilor Walton: On page ten, unallocated funds. So we're still looking at about \$1.7 million, which is less than it was a couple of weeks ago. Mr. Whitaker: Okay, the fund balance available, Councilor Walton? Councilor Walton: Yes. Mr. Whitaker: Yes, we were looking at fund balance or undesignated funds in the amount of \$2,133,377. Councilor Walton: Okay, thanks. Mr. Whitaker: And again, these are one-time or your savings account money. So they're not to be used to cover reoccurring expenditures. Councilor Walton: I understand. Councilor Shornak: But we can. But we can. Mr. Whitaker: You can. Let's just say for example if you should use, let's just say for example if you should use \$500,000 of the fund balance to cover a reoccurring expenditure in the 2016 year. You're going to have to dip into your fund balance again in 2017 for an additional \$500,000 because these are reoccurring expenditures unless you find new sources of revenues for the City. So to use fund balance for reoccurring expenditures, pretty much means that you are dipping into your savings account and robbing your savings account. And at some point that savings account is going to have a zero balance unless you budget in future years to replenish those dollars. So if you should dip into your savings account to the tune of \$500,000, you would have to budget into your budget a reoccurring expenditure of a thousand dollars a year for example for the next five years to replenish the fund balance. Councilor Shornak: Right. Mayor Pelham: Thank you. Councilor Walton: Give us some time to work it out.

Mayor Pelham: Councilor Zevgolis. Councilor Zevgolis: Thank you, Mr. Whitaker. Going back to the second page of this sheet, it shows that the school operating fund is, the adopted budget for 2014 was \$47,544,000 and it shows the textbook fund is \$650,000, the school cafeteria fund at \$3,095,000 and I'm assuming that building and bus funds are the school buses and the building? Mr. Whitaker: That's correct. Councilor Zevgolis: And that's \$610,000, totaling that would it be accurate to say that it's costing us \$51,800,000 and some thousand to run our schools in the City, would that be a correct statement? Mr. Whitaker: That is correct. Councilor Zevgolis: Okay, because I noticed that that's more than what our adopted budget is in the general fund. Thank you.

MR. HALEY: Madam Mayor, in the interest of moving along, there is one more staff presentation. If we knock out the staff presentations then the rest of your meeting is strictly for public hearing. On the retiree thing, which there's people here for, the retirees. And being that we know there's people who want to speak to that as well, we'd like to do the staff presentation. Mayor Pelham: Okay, Ms. Vance, please.

Ms. Vance, Good evening Mayor and Vice Mayor and Council. As Mr. Haley stated, we've heard from a number of concerned retirees and what we're doing is based on that feedback, based on that feedback, we would like to make the following adjustment to the previous proposal that we presented to Council. And specifically, I want to start out with the reimbursements, the retiree reimbursement.

What we would like to propose is that the retirees with fifteen to nineteen years of service will be eligible for twenty percent of the single premium for retirees. And for the 2015 that would be \$139. And what we are now proposing is that be a flat reimbursement that they will receive. In the past they've had to show proof of insurance every month and now we will go to once a year to show that proof and then they will get this flat amount for the rest of the year.

Also, retirees with twenty years of service will be eligible for thirty percent of the single premium for retirees and for 2015 that amount is \$207. And again, that would be a flat amount for the reimbursement. And just for your information, currently if you retired before 2004, the cap amount for reimbursement is \$947 and what we're trying to do is just level the playing field. And after 2004, it's \$553. The reimbursement will be based on years of service and not what you pay for outside coverage and I think you have your presentation in your package. Retiree rates, currently there's several multiple buckets of retirees and the one that I want to talk about is for retirees that are actually receiving, I'm sorry, that actually retired before 2004 and they are under the age of 65. And I just want to show you the comparison that under TLC, which is the new carrier that we have selected, their rates have gone down

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significantly and again this includes dental and vision. And I know I have some retirees that have been upset about some of the proposals but we have also had retirees that have been, that are currently on our Cigna plan that will experience a decrease. So they are happy with the new rates. Spouses would be responsible for their entire premium. So what that means is there will be no longer any City contributions towards their premiums. So again, the City is proposing not to pay their spouse's coverage going forward. And then you have another slide in your package. And this is the rates for the retirees that are after, that retired after 2004. The only rate that went up was for the high option and that's for someone that would retire with fifteen to nineteen years of service and that rate is slightly higher. It is \$554.40. But all the other rates did have a decrease. And again, this includes dental and vision and again we're proposing that spouses would have to now pay for their insurance. The City will no longer pay for those premiums. The last slide is AARP. And effective January 1, 2016, the City is proposing to no longer pay for the spouse's premiums. However, the City proposes to continue to pay for the spouse's premium until January 1. So we're giving them that time to transition. Instead of July 1 that was originally proposed, we're now going with January 1. And this allows eight months for them to transition to the billing process and obtain possibly a different carrier of their choosing if they would like. Or they could remain on our plan. Effective July 1, 2015, the City proposes a cap for the AARP. And that is equal to the retirees single premium, which is twenty percent of the current retiree rate for fifteen and nineteen years and thirty percent of the current retiree rate for twenty plus years. We still would like to put in a sunset clause. And what means is that the City is proposing that retirees will be responsible for their premiums after the age of 85. However, if anyone is currently on the plan that is over eighty years old, they will be grandfathered under this provision. And a broker is willing to assist anyone with any questions or any transitional issues that they may have. Are there any questions? Mayor Pelham: Yes. Councilor Shornak? Councilor Shornak: Gail, this has not been presented to the retirees, correct? Ms. Vance: No. The original proposal was sent out to the retirees. Councilor Shornak: Right. Ms. Vance: But based on their feedback and their concerns, we tried to kind of meet them in the middle. Mr. Haley: Madam Mayor, which concludes staff presentations tonight.

Mayor Pelham: I hereby open this public hearing. As soon as you come forward, give your name, your Ward, which Ward you live in and/or the city or county that you reside in. Okay, and the first person is Rita Joyner. And if everyone could listen so we can hear all the comments, please, thank you. And also remember you're not to identify any person by name or title and just in general make a very general live statement please. Thank you.

MS. JOYNER: My name is Rita Joyner. I live at 711 Francis Street, Hopewell, Virginia, Ward 1. Good evening Mayor Pelham, Vice Mayor Bailey and members of Council. What we are witnessing tonight is a colossal abuse of power by the Hopewell City School Board administration using parents and children as their pawns in a high stakes game with City Council. They have duped the public into thinking there is a huge shortfall but this so called budget shortfall is manufactured. It is primarily about additions to the budget, some of which could be classified as frivolous. What the board is really saying is that if we can't get our way, which means funding for raises, additional positions and more, we're going to bill them anyway and punish the children in this City by cutting athletics, fine arts, et cetera. It's despicable. They initially said they needed 28, \$2.8 million. Now they only need half that amount. That's so weird. So what do they really want? What the system desperately needs is a top down review, a comprehensive audit by an outside entity with a proven track record. The system is broken. Chaos reigns supreme to include dissension in the ranks, intimidation, lack of autonomy at certain levels, teachers being dumped on with mountains of administrative minutia that take away precious instructional time. Collaboration and effective communication are one of the hallmarks of an effective school system are in short supply. The central office continues to issue edicts from above but something is clearly not working as evidenced by the fact that only one out of five schools in the system are fully accredited. That is a scary statistic. One thing that unites us this evening is that schools matter. They really matter. The current state of our division is detrimental to the economic health of this community. We cannot ignore the problem any



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longer but more money is not necessarily the solution. If it is, let's be strategic. Let's employ the scientific method, fund selected positions and analyze the outcomes before calling for a wholesale implementation. Council has already approved a two cent tax hike that would fund several positions but that's not enough for the school board. They will show the entire City whose boss. Where does it end? The school board's arrogance is unbecoming and intolerable. I attended a Council meeting last year where the decision of the board was in question. Councilor Pelham said something very profound. If board decisions cannot be challenged, then why have City Council. It was an epiphany for me. We must be held accountable, they must be held accountable for their behavior and recall should not be off the table.

Any additional monies should have strings attached. We need wholesale change. Demand that they bring in a reputable consulting firm to shift the paradigm. We are small enough and committed enough as demonstrated by the turnout tonight, to right this ship.

Don't forget, Hopewell is the Wonder City. As altruistic as it sounds, let's be the educational model for the state and for the country. I urge Council to act boldly, wisely and in the best interest of the entire community. Thank you.

DR. JOYNER: I'm Dr. Wesley Joyner, I live at 301 Sherwood Drive, Mr. Zevgolis' Ward. First of all, let me start by stating that I do believe we've got a major problem on our hands here with the school funding request, one that's going to require some creative thinking on Council's part to sort of financially address the situation. And additionally, like many others that are here tonight, I'm sure, I mean I don't want to see Hopewell's public school system crash and burn to the point where valuable programs, athletics and stuff have to be cut or a lack of accreditation prompts the state to step in and run our elementary schools. Yet, with all that being said, I feel like it's just as important to point out that the problems we now face with our schools did not just appear out of thin air. Additionally, we need to realize that the manner in which these budget concerns have been presented to the general public recently is disingenuous at best. Clearly put, the problems that our schools currently face are the direct result of incompetent management at the top tiers of the central office. Across the board, pun intended too, people haven't done their jobs the way they should have. And then instead of listening to voices of dissent or accepting responsibility for their actions, they've all decided now at the very last minute to join together and cry about being underfunded, which by the way my mother just demonstrated, they're not.

Consequently, what we face now and I think everybody here ought to know this, all right, is a scenario that's comparable to blackmail. Or more specifically the taxpayer extortion. By banking on our desire to see our schools succeed, the superintendent and board have cleverly forced us all into a corner where we and Council would all be the bad guys. You know, I mean, people would lose jobs, kids would lose athletics. If somehow Council didn't grant this insane amount of money to solve a problem that was caused by the top tiers of administration in the first place. What a shameful tactic, particularly when somebody already has one foot out the door. In light of all this, I ask the Council to keep in mind that what's good for the goose is good for the gander. If they think they can hold us by the short hairs, those roles can be reversed. Thus if by the end of your deliberations you all are so included to grant any additional funding to the schools and I'm going to reiterate right here in front of everybody, I think you ought to. I mean I'd like to see you give some assistance to them. You need to attach strings to that deal, okay. Strings that would consider recalls. I'd just leave it there. Listen, I mean, I was born and raised here. I received a great education here and I've just recently moved back. I've got a kid on the way and this kid might very well end up being put through the public school system. All I want as a parent is to ensure that his or her education and his educational future is going to be sound. And I feel like a fresh vision — would certainly get the ball rolling. So I ask you to consider these recommendations. Thank you.

MR. JOYNER: Larry Joyner, 711 Francis Street. Blackmail, I'll give you the definition of blackmail here. What the school board is trying to do to City Council. They are already fully funded but that's not enough. The board threatens draconian cuts if it doesn't get what it wants. And by the way that equates

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to about 22 cents per hundred dollars of assessed value for property for everyone in the room if you give them the full amount. They will throw Council under the bus and this is a lame excuse for not doing its job in the first place. Now, I wonder why the board is so desperate to get this full funding when they're already fully funded. It makes, you wonder if they have not already committed to these additional positions and put you in a situation which is a fait accompli. Now, I don't know if that's happened or not but they seem to be mighty desperate about funding these additional positions and threatening to cut our favored programs that have been proven successful in the City. I'll be frank. You need to recall the board and start all over. If you don't have the stomach to do that, okay I can understand. But you need to at least expand the board by two members along with an upcoming vacancy that's due, that will add three new members to the board and that will end this craziness that they're pronouncing. We need to get the lead teachers out of their offices. And I'd like to remind you of one thing. That this is a reoccurring expense. If you approve this \$2.84 million, you're going to have to do it again next year and then you see how the school board has increased their rates every year. All right, it's time for people to get off their butts and do their job. Thank you.

MR. SYLVESTER: Good evening members of Council. My name is Sam Sylvester. I live in Ward 3 at 109 Kristen Avenue here in Hopewell. I am currently a sixth grade student at Carter G. Woodson Middle School where I play on the baseball team. I'm here tonight to express my concern that the school system receive enough funding to provide both athletic and academic opportunities for me and my classmates. As students and athletes, we are instructed to study and practice and everything else will take care of itself. As a twelve year old, I have to trust that our elected and appointed officials will make an investment in the children of this community. All I'm asking is that you provide the same opportunities and necessary funding that other communities such as Petersburg, Prince George and Chesterfield provide their schools. I think my classmates and teammates deserve these opportunities. This means funding for athletics, the arts and music and seats at the Governor's school. In spite of the temporary financial difficulties this may cause, I know you, too, believe that we are worth this investment. Thank you for your time and for allowing me to speak tonight.

MS. JOHNSON: My name is Carla Johnson. I'm a resident of Prince George. I am a proud graduate of Hopewell High School class of 1981. I am a 24 year teaching veteran and I worked in two of the three elementary schools and been the varsity cheerleading coach at the high school. By the way, I am a lead teacher and I am a classroom teacher as are all lead teachers. I'm not here to ask for a raise. I'm here to enlighten the City Council and the citizens of Hopewell about a Hopewell teacher's job since apparently there are many misconceptions by those who are not within our walls. It is apparent by comments made in Council meetings and in the media that some don't have any idea of what we actually do. These comments made about the Hopewell school system, its superintendent, administration and especially its teachers are discouraging, inflammatory and an embarrassment to our small community. Most importantly, they have been made on conclusions based on paper and not being within the walls of the schools to gather valid data on the work ethic and caliber of the staff that work in this system. Desperate, we can use the word desperate but it's to educate the children. That is what our school system is desperate to do. My staff begins their work before, is in our building long before the day begins and stays until the building is closed at night. Their nights or weekends are devoted to school events. Our summers and those that think we're off for three months also have inaccurate information are filled with evaluation and training. Funds were exhausted to pay for tutoring for struggling students in mid-February. And in my school alone, eight teachers volunteered their time to stay after school and work with these students. I know this goes on in the other schools in the City as well. Teachers provide food for hungry students, supplies for those parents that don't supply them, clothing for those that need it. I've seen numerous teachers throughout my tenure that have paid for field trips, lunches and even things as trivial as Valentines for students who had none. This is the heart of the Hopewell teacher. I have students in my room who are below grade level expectations that need work especially in the area of reading. Due to budget cuts, we lost two federally funded reading positions last year. Currently we do

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not have adequate reading and math specialists to meet the needs of our population. This is the reality. This is one of the items on the budget that will have to again be cut if this isn't funded.

I recently received a student in my classroom who doesn't speak or understand English. Our ESL teacher is split between two schools and she's only at our school two days a week. This student is not getting the education he deserves. I know it's your desire to make Hopewell the best community possible, one that's going to draw new families that can grow and prosper here. This isn't going to happen without quality schools. No matter what some believe, you already have the quality faculty and I challenge you to come in and see for yourself. We're vital to this community, the schools are. Ask police officers to work with no radios or weapons or firefighters to buy their own equipment. How would the quality and success of their jobs be affected in this case? Last thing, out of 123 public school divisions in Virginia, Hopewell schools is 103rd in the amount of funding it receives from the local government. I ask that you fund the school budget that gives us the vital personnel and tools that will equip us to do the job that we desire to do.

MS. BAREFOOT: Mayor, good evening. Vice Mayor, City Council members. Last week I was here and I wanted to read this again. However, I was introduced just today in regards to a new, new proposal so I wasn't aware that that was going to be here. But I wanted to make sure that my documentation was read again because I read it like a chipmunk last week and it was so fast maybe nobody would have received it or absorbed it, so. Good evening, my name is James Barefoot. I live in Chesterfield. I'm a recently retired City of Hopewell police officer with almost 28 years of service. I'm here today because of a letter I received from the City regarding a proposed change in the City's retirees' health insurance benefits. I am deeply concerned, distraught and appalled as well others should be regarding this proposal. The letter stated how they were excited of how the retirees' rates this year were going to be extremely competitive. But they were not competitive for me. At this moment, I am currently a rider on my wife's insurance policy. But I'm not sure for how long due to her medical condition. She is legally blind and in the near future may be dropping her insurance and going out on disability. When that happens, I will no longer be able to be on her insurance policy. I am concerned that the letter stated as a retiree, we would have to opt in or opt out. Now with this new proposal I'm not sure if that meant we had to come back to the City's policy, when in fact if I leave the City's policy, I'm saving the City money on my wife's insurance policy. It would be cheaper to reimburse me for that. The proposed insurance policy, would this mean we would not be able to change our minds in the future if we opted out? Again, consistent inconsistencies. I am aware that the City currently offers me health insurance. However, under this new proposal, the City would only be paying thirty percent of the retiree rate and I would be responsible for the rest, which with my years of service will come to \$441.70. That is if I chose the City's insurance and this is out of my pocket. It appears that this proposal forces the retiree to go back to the City's insurance offering even if they choose not to participate with that policy. Either way, with this proposal will not honor its decades old commitment regarding compensation of reimbursement or for that matter future reimbursements to its retirees. In my opinion, the City actually saves money when they are not the primary insurance carrier for its retirees and are only responsible for the lower reimbursement fees of other carriers. The letter also states how the proposed changes should affect most retirees and that they would see a decrease in their premiums. Currently, I am not aware of any current or future retiree who is excited about this proposal or who would see a decrease in their premiums. Do not confuse our sign of compassion as a sign of weakness or ignorance. When I was hired in 1986, I was assured that the City would continue to honor its commitment to offer and reimburse us first responders' insurance. This current proposal abandons that honor and places them along with their family members in a dangerous situation. With regards to this, I was recently diagnosed with Type II diabetes. I take numerous medications throughout the day now and this proposal would affect my wife and I profoundly economically. Considering my current medical condition, I do not see my so-called rates decreasing as the letter I received stated they may. I, along with several other retirees, are currently on fixed incomes and find it difficult to make ends meet. If this proposal is implemented, it would cause an extreme hardship on the retiree as well as their family. The current insurance reimbursement should not be

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abandoned. The letter also stated how this proposal would equalize every retiree current and future with respect to the offered health insurance regardless of the many previous years of service that the retirees sacrificed for the City. This is a slap in the fact of the twenty-plus year retired first responders. I implore each of you to do the right thing when considering this proposal. Please do not vote for this proposal as it will deeply affect the lives of all current and future retirees. After decades of unwavering service and sacrifices, this is how City repays its honorable retired first responders. We fought the good fight for you, now I ask you to fight the good fight for us. Do the right thing. Just because we retired should not also mean we are forgotten, out of sight, out of mind. It appears to many retirees that the City considers us a burden to them, similar to missing in action.

MR. KERN: I'm David Kern, 407 Ramsey, Ward 1. Good evening, Madam Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor, Council members, parents of Hopewell, students. We came to Hopewell in 2010 because it was the best school. Now, I've been doing the Army thing for 23 years. I know a lot about smoke and mirrors with money. I know it's not on just one side, no offense. It's coming from all sides. My point is, we cannot expect that our kids are going to get a quality education if we have to concern ourselves with whether they're going to lose their sports, their music, their arts, their exceptional education. We tend to think of our kids as learning either auditory, kinesthetic, visual. But the real fact is those are just means of learning. The way that we learn are the patterns that we associate with the learning. For some, it's sports. For many it's music. For many others, it's art. We lose these programs, you're going to lose the activities that are going to bring the kids about, back into schools, doing their homework, increase your dropouts, I mean the list goes on. The crime will increase. I get to my point, folks. The crime will increase, you know, you're just going to lose the whole thing. And the biggest thing, I know that we think about saving money but when we do not fund these projects, we wind up spending more money. We wind up losing money when people leave the City. Thank you.

MS. BUJAKOWSKI: Good evening Madam Mayor and members of Council, City staff and residents. My name is Jane Bujakowski. I live in Ward 3 and have been a resident of Hopewell for over fifty years. I've had the honor to teach in the Hopewell public school system for 37 years and my mother was a teacher in our school system as well for forty years. My husband, our children and I are all proud products of the Hopewell public school system. I've had a member of my family tell me that that budget is hard to do and I know this year is no different. But the gap between needed funding and the offered funding level is beyond imagination. As the gifted education teacher at Carter G. Woodson, I have taught hundreds of children over the years providing a rigorous curriculum that often involved the community. I can tell you that our students work very hard to qualify for consideration to attend a Governor's school. And in many cases, Hopewell students become leaders in these schools and that reflects very well on our school system and our City. I understand that some in our City are of the age where the future of our schools is not a major concern. However, I believe that is our duty to support our schools so that our current students can succeed and then take on the responsibility of supporting their youth. I know that some of you have worked very hard to bring economic development to our City and also have worked hard to improve the image of Hopewell in order to attract young families to move here and live in our City. I believe that the fact that we are proposing to underfund our schools by such a large amount will not only damage your development efforts but will certainly drive prospective home purchasing families to another location. I believe that no funding, no sports, no fine arts, no gifted program and no Governor's school slots will mean no future for our school system and our City. At first I was angry at these developments, now I'm just sad. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you. Thank you.

MS. ZEVGOLIS: I am Angel Zevgolis. I live in Ward 4. I live on 380 Red Oak Court in Hopewell, Virginia. My daughter Trinity Zevgolis goes to Patrick Copeland. She has struggled over the years to maintain where she needs to be at the school. She had a teacher step in this year and help her get her reading up. Now they're talking about cutting the reading recovery program. They're talking about cutting certain things and I don't agree with it. I have children in my neighborhood that all participate in

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sports. They all, if they didn't have sports, I can tell you they'd be running the street and it would be bad. It's crazy. My daughter needs the reading recovery program, needs it still. If it was not for this one teacher, my daughter did not want to go back to school. My daughter gets up in the morning, because she knows that she has that one person that's always going to support her back. The principal this year at Patrick Copeland has supported me and my daughter severely this year. My daughter had a lot of problems, a lot. She stepped in. Last year, her kindergarten teacher stepped in and said my daughter needed an IEP. She needed speech, she needed occupational therapy. This year, she's just now getting occupational therapy. If it wasn't for these teachers, I don't know where my daughter would be. My daughter is special needs, severely. She has seizures since she was born. She had a blood clot on her brain when they found it when she was four days old. She is severely delayed because of all these issues. I feel if you start cutting programs for everything, you're not just hurting my child but you're going to hurt every parent in here, every child that is working so hard to get to college that is doing these sports that is bringing their grades up so that they can continue to play in these sports. When you back down and you drop the bottom out on these students, where do you leave them? On the streets. And that's all I have to say.

MS. JONES: I'm Kacia Jones and I am a student at Hopewell High School. I'm not really a school person but I'm in the Hopewell marching band. And the Hopewell marching band encourages me to come to school and get good grades so I can stay on the marching band. And I don't, if we don't, if we have to like cut out sports and everything, nobody is going to want to go to Hopewell High School at all. Like everybody is going to leave. Everybody is already talking about going to Prince George, moving out of state. And I'm not, I don't want to move out of state. So that's how I feel about it.

MR. PARTON: Good evening members of City Council. I'm Johnny Parton. I live on 207 Fairview Avenue, Ward 3. I'm personally very disappointed with City Council this year and the whole budget process. Each of you frequently state that you all talk with members of your Ward, the community and Hopewell in general, that you gauge their opinions on certain issues to see what they want. Well, just to help you with this, I've done the exact same thing along with a group of friends and residents. So here are the facts. Over fifteen residents, including today, have gone up before you and spoken that they want the schools to receive additional funding. Four letters to the editor have been written to the Hopewell News, stating they want additional funding. Two have made it to the Progress Index for additional funding. Ten Hopewell businesses have helped with increasing awareness and their owners have stated that they want additional funding for the school system. A group of residents out of their own money, purchased an ad for the Hopewell newspaper, not the school administration, the people themselves put an ad in the paper to raise awareness that they want additional funding for the school system. And if you go to [www.hopewellschoolpetition.com](http://www.hopewellschoolpetition.com), you will see that over 670 alumni, residents, business owners and people that have a vested interest in Hopewell want additional funding for the school system. I highly doubt that any of you have talked to over 670 individuals about the budget let alone the additional funding for the school system. Now, think about this. Not only do so many people support giving money to the school system, but a large majority of you are sitting on your seat right now because of the Hopewell school system. A large majority of you graduated from the Hopewell school system and if it wasn't for the school system, none of you would probably occupy the seat that you're sitting in. If you weren't given the gift of a good education from the Hopewell school system, you probably would not be sitting in that seat. Therefore, you owe it to the parents and grandparents of Hopewell to explain why you will not support additional funding if you choose so. Thank you very much. [applause]

MS. STABLES: Good evening Councilmen and ladies. My name is Lisa Stables. I live at 408 North Fourth Avenue, here in Hopewell in Ward 1. I'm very disappointed at the way things are going. I raised a son here back in the, well, he graduated in 2008. And he got as good an education if not better of anywhere else he could have gone. I mean he really succeeded. And I'm not sure if things are going to turn out so well for my daughter and that worries me. I'm really disappointed in both sides, you know,

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the way this whole thing has been handled. I'm not sure I will be here another school year. Because if we have to go through this every time to squeeze a nickel, you know, if we have to go through the school board using our kids as pawns to people that don't want to give up anything else, any of the money, then why stay here. Parents are getting really fed up with this and so are the kids. And you know, I'm just, is there any way you know, we could get a liaison between you two to go back and forth, you know. Something's got to give. This is embarrassing. Thank you very much.

MR. CANSINO: Madam Mayor, City Council. My name is Michael Cansino. I live in Ward 5. I'm a 1987 graduate of Hopewell High School. I'm also a parent of a gifted student at Carter G. Woodson Middle School. And I'm also a parent of a senior at Appomattox Regional Governor's School. I kept my children in Hopewell because I believe in this great City and it is and its great school system. To stop sending Hopewell students to Appomattox Regional Governor's School and Maggie Walker Governor's School will be to discriminate against students who have earned the right to attend these two wonderful schools through their hard work and high achievement. I ask you, as a parent, and as almost a lifelong citizen of Hopewell, stop playing around with our children's future because they are our greatest resource. Thank you.

MR. STRONG: Madam Mayor, City Council. It's good to be here. I'm glad I'm here and not where you are. I'm Clint Strong, 813 Smithfield Avenue, Ward 5. I wanted to speak briefly to the retirees' health insurance issue. But first of all I want to thank you for the service that you give the community and hopefully you folks realize that it's a sacrifice to be on Council. It's not all pleasure, which I think everyone is pretty much pointing out today. We are very concerned, the retirees, with a letter that was received and issued on around April 3rd. And that letter talked about the health benefits that retirees are receiving. And basically, it eliminates the spouse and dependent coverage that's been covered for some period of time for retirees. It eliminates coverage for those over 85, now that seems to be changing and it seems to change on a daily basis. And also, we're not sure what's happening at the enrollment period of the 28th when no proposal has been adopted by the Council. In any case, we're confused and we were surprised. A significant financial, the health benefits program is a significant financial benefit to the retirees and to eliminate that as quickly as it's being proposed without adequate information is very, very confusing and actually very frightening. Basically, we have a series of questions which we think need to be answered before any change should be made. Number one, what is the cost for those that are going to be dropped? We don't know, it may be an individual case but the retiree does not know. Can a dropped recipient ever be, even be continued on the United Health Plan even at their own expense. And will the dropped recipient be required to qualify medically for some kind of a program. I know of a particular case where the qualifications are required. Many will not qualify because of the infirmities of age. Can a dropped recipient receive care or insurance through another company or will they have to meet special qualifications for that? Will any assistance be offered to the retiree if they're required to look for other insurance? As you know, getting health insurance in our current system is an extremely complex process. You dial, you punch one, you punch two, you talk to somebody, you try to call them back; you'll never get the same person again. If you're 85 or 90 years old, please don't put them through that process. What happens to retirees that are unable to attend the enrollment period and again what you're enrolling for if you have not approved the process? And is the prescription drug program being discontinued? Basically, we'd ask you not approve the retiree health insurance changes proposed in the budget and continue the policy of previous budget resolutions for the full fiscal year. If you desire to make a change in the future, direct human resources to work with retirees to come up with a program that we understand and perhaps phase it in. Don't make it all at once and eliminate the shock factor. We'll work with you. We all will work with you but we like to be involved in the process.

MAYOR PELHAM: Thank you so much.

MR. CLINT: I wanted a chance to react to a comment that the spouses, dependent covered, being covered by health insurance is kind of a bad thing. And I have a very bad reaction to that because I was

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involved in putting it into effect. Think about what happens when you have a tornado, a hurricane, environmental changes, your fire personnel, your police personnel, your public works personnel, and most other personnel are called upon to respond. And they respond immediately on a 24 hour basis. You might remember and maybe not, I remember the Year 2K issue, where the whole financial system was going to fall apart. You didn't hear much about it afterwards because it didn't happen. Police, fire, public works personnel and directors were at their stations or at an emergency to one, two in the morning until we found out there was no impact. You didn't read about that but they did that. The question I have is who protected the families of the workers who were serving the community? Who was at home? Who was handling the crisis at home when the worker was down here? Most folks would be with their family and they could provide protection. So, we consider the spouses equally sacrificing to those who are emergency responders. We are a team. Our spouses and us. They man the home front, we responded to the emergencies and worked here. And this was honored when the Council approved health benefits for spouses and others after they retire. It was counted on in planning our retirements. This was honored by Hopewell when you adopted that. And we would ask that you continue that and continue to honor the contribution to the employees' health retirement system. Thank you.

MR. HOWARD: Good evening Madam Mayor, City Council. I come to you today as a father with a child in Hopewell High School. I come to you today as a Chairman of the Hopewell Republican Committee and I come to you as a professional government employee. Over time, employees of the government at all levels have to make sacrifices. The school board was counting on money from the federal government that did not come in. That is a gamble. In the Constitution of the United States, there are numerated powers and education is not a numerated power to the federal government so for the school board to count on money, which is not due them under the Constitution is wrong. That's like going to a casino and gambling money that you do not have. I'm going to ask Council to support the school board with the money that they lost on their ill choice to gamble that money away. The school does need that money, our students need that money. But I'd also like to ask the Council to do, that money that they supply to the schools not go for teachers pay raises, the schools lost the money due to the schools not being accredited. That means the teachers are not doing everything they should be doing or the schools would be accredited. Pay for performance. If the schools were accredited, that money would have been there. They were not. As a federal employee, I went through four years of no pay raise. I went through federal furloughs where I was out of work without pay because of budget cuts. All federal employees, all state employees, and City employees face that risk by working for the government. Once the schools come back and that money is returned by the federal government; that is fine. But until then, pay for performance. If the money is given to the schools from Council, that money should go to the students, not to increase the pay of the failing schools of the teachers. Thank you very much.

MR. HALAS: Rich Halas, coach of cross country and wrestling at the high school, a teacher of English. I currently live in Ward 1 at 3606 Portsmouth. This time next month I'll be living at 3007 Luck Lane because I just bought a house to stay in Hopewell. That's the plan anyway. I'll be brief. I'm in response to some of the aforementioned comments and concerned that mentions of chaos, et cetera. That the school board is using people as pawns and so forth. It feels from my perspective that the school board had its hand forced and that a school board's job is to identify ways to keep the best teachers possible in the school for our children and to provide the best opportunities possible to identify weaknesses and address those such as finding literacy specialist to help a third grade class that has difficulty in reading. It seems pretty important to me as an English teacher. Beyond that point, I wanted to respond to some of the things I read in the paper about how some of the members of Council chose not to support additional funding for the purposes that it would be best to instead fire bad teachers and just give more money to good teachers. As someone who strives to be one of the aforementioned good teachers, I would like to express that a good teacher is not as objectively, excuse me ma'am, a good teacher is not as objectively quantifiable as one we can find in business or we can measure. Moving forward, it's not as objectively quantifiable as to whether or not a teacher is good. And as such, we rely on evaluations and other techniques. We would have to look at a variety of difficulty in determining good and bad teachers.

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So, lastly, in terms of the school board having its hand forced and the situation is as it is. It looks to us as the bottom, one of the bottom twenty cities in the state of giving funding to its schools, I know that if it were my position to allocate funds to a school and I was one of the bottom twenty out of 120 some then I would be embarrassed. And my concern for you is, knowing my students and knowing my athletes, that if we were to force ourselves in a position where those students didn't have those kind of outlets that they have, I noticed that earlier you proposed to get four more squad cars for the police force. I recommend that if that's the case and we don't have those programs in schools, you find yourself a lot more police officers and a lot more squad cars.

MR. ELIADES: Elliott Eliades, 900 Mansion Drive. It's been a long wait outside but I'm glad I stayed and I just wanted to speak. You know, and taking some of the emotion out. Certainly it's very emotional for the last week or so, I think. People are riled up. This might happen; this might not happen. If we put all that aside, which I'm not saying well, bad, anything. I'm just saying we have to look at what does the school need and what can you afford to pay. And that's what we have to do. And I think you have the money to handle the shortfall and this is just my opinion, the shortfall and some of the positions that were listed. I think there were nine different items. And just in my opinion and I'm not an educator, but the reading specialists, the math, possibly some of the transition teachers. But that's not my job. I still think that we can make it work for a million dollars. Starting with the \$390,000 from the tax increase. From there you go to some other possible monies that you have already allocated to other events, other things. And I think you should look at the rainy day fund to make up the difference. So I think you should at least at minimum fund a million dollars. I think it can be done and we can move on and educate our children. Thank you very much.

MR. NICKEL: Good evening Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council members and City administration. My name is John Nickel and I'm a seven month retiree from the City of Hopewell within the fire service. I live in Prince George County. I received a letter on April the 3rd about an insurance increase. The many things have happened along with the time until tonight. No way in the world that the retirees can look at that information and process it and being able to understand what is good for us and what's good for the City. I do not know what is going on as far as the insurance, what kind of benefits it has but I'd like to speak for some of the ones that you called their name and they're not here and I know they're retirees. As one gentleman spoke last week, he could not be here tonight through his wife through emergency having a heart attack last week. I do not know or understand the \$207, I don't know whether that's going be our cost or what it is. But I just want to like to fill you in on a little venture. Think about this, just go along with my story. Twenty-five years ago, an employee comes to the City and works for the City. And through that time, this employee takes it on and enjoys their work and progresses, five years, ten years, increasing on the insurance, that employee kept on paying. Decreasing on other things as far as the VRS and other retirements and benefits that were declining, that employee kept on working. Twenty years comes in, this employee continues to work looking at the 25 year mark because that's what's being invested. And as me, I looked at it also, 25 years, age 50, I do have the option for retirement. But back to the employee continuing to work. Now it's 25 years, this employee is vested, creating to be able to retire, enjoy their self and create another career for that person. Now, throughout the whole time of their employment, things went up, things went down but the City continued to pay the retired person's insurance. From 25 years ago to 5 years ago, to 2004, it changed from to the employee and spouse to strictly the employee paying for their insurance. Now, I don't know if the \$207 is what I'm going to pay and like I said before for what I pay now I have reimbursement because that is what the City benefit gave me. I will never mention the employee's name but the employee could be you. Thank you.

MS. WICHERS: I live at 276 South 22nd Avenue Street. I think we should keep school sports because school sports keep kids out of trouble, keeps them healthy and obesity is a major problem. School sports also develop teamwork and socialization skills and can oftentimes open up avenues that allow kids that



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would not be able to attend college the ability to do so through scholarships. Please let us have our tax money for our schools.

MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Tavonte Williams. And I live on South 11th Avenue. I'm currently in the ninth grade and I'm in marching band. And I'm just here to talk to you all about how I feel about the whole situation. Not only do we march in marching band and play music but we also learn leadership skills and life skills. And being that if it gets cut then the elementary students because it's a lot of kids that look up to us in the community. And just choir and sports as well, that's basketball, baseball and I just feel like it would be a disappointment if the little kids at the elementary gets it cut as well. And they wouldn't have nothing to look forward to for their future because me, personally, I want to go to college and I want to major in music. And if this gets cut, then I feel like that wouldn't proceed forward. So, that's all.

MS. KARAKOV: Hi, Catherine Karakov, Chester, Virginia, 1989 graduate of Hopewell High School, athlete and continued on into college for my athletics. I apologize for being in pajamas but as most of these teachers know, DuPont Elementary came from a pajama night, as every single teacher in this building would to represent. I stand here very emotionally because I waited as a graduate of Hopewell High School for twenty years to be able to come back and teach in my community, following my father's footsteps who I never mentioned to gain any credit because I feel what I gained, I deserved through the City of Hopewell on my own name. But my father gave his life, his time and every single bit of dedication and devotion to this school system and to think what is happening now is absolutely heartbreaking. I left Tri-City Schools and again I waited twenty years to come back here and be able to teach. And to think that I teach at DuPont Elementary, the school system that I went to, that I grew up in that works its tail off for accreditation, for the reading resource teachers that we have. I think right now, in my own opinion, there's a lot of stones being thrown and this is a personal vendetta between City Council and members of the school board. That's obvious, it goes without saying. I have a superintendent and an assistant superintendent for the first time in twenty years, every single one of my kindergarten students and every student in DuPont Elementary and these other schools know. He's not a businessman. He's in the school. He cares about the teachers. Dr. Evans is in our school. It is not that there is a businessman in our school, it is a person that cares about our community and cares about our schools. And I'm sorry that I get very emotional about it. I think I have every right to be as a native and how much it meant to me to come back to this. And I guarantee you, in looking more at the budget, probably one in four of these teachers right now is in credit collection because of the lack of health insurance when other, when the school was asked, City Council was asked to help provide insurance for these teachers, probably one in four are in credit collections because of insurance that we cannot afford to pay for ourselves to pay medical bills. And secondly, the things that have been poorly about these teachers and I hate to even say names but for one family that started a lot of things and continue it, I invite you into Room 1 at DuPont elementary any day of the week.

MR. WESTRY: My name is Dewayne Westry. I live at 4011 Jamestown Drive. As you can see, behind us this is only a third of the Hopewell team and playing football is like, when we heard that, that cut us deep. So we had to show up. And our coach right there, that man right there, keeps us out of a lot of trouble. He's not only a coach; he's like a father figure in my life. He be on us not about football but about grades and showing us how to be a man in life, like that man right there; that's a very important man in my life.

MR. ALLEN: My name is Jerel Allen. 2405 Barrier Street. I don't think they should cut sports because like where I'm from, this would keep us going to school every day. This will keep us motivated to make it up out of here like knowing that we can find something that we are like very good at that we can like be dominant at it. That encourages us to go to school for real, for real. That's encouraged me to go to school every day. I wake up every day at 6:30. Get dressed and go to school because I know that in order

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to play football I got to go to school. In order to go to a college, I've got to make good grades. So don't encourage me not only to be an athlete but a student athlete. And these guys feel the same way. Like we might not be from the same neighborhood but they feel the same exact way. Like this is not only a sport, this is our life for real. And not only Coach Irby, it's eight other coaches on us every day about our grades just making us work hard in the weight room, work hard in the classroom. And you can ask my guys because I'm there like one day out of the week every day checking on my grades just to make sure I was straight because I want to be successful and this is the only way for real I can be successful. Thanks.

MR. IRBY: My name is Ricky Irby. I live in Ward 4. I'm the head football coach here at Hopewell High School. Not only am I the head football coach, I'm a lifelong resident. I have two children here in the gifted program. So this touches me on several levels. Our kids are very concerned and I feel like the longer that this goes on, the more catastrophic it's going to be to our kids in the City. And that's what it's all about. It's about these kids. And it's about their programs. I just would ask for a resolution as quickly as possible because I really feel it could be detrimental to our community the longer this drags out. I hope and pray that we don't lose football because as you can see, not only football but all athletics and the fine arts and the gifted program and the Governor's school kids. I just feel like that would be a huge catastrophe for our City. It would be very catastrophic and I just would never want that to happen. Like these guys said behind you, they put in a lot of work in the classroom. And I really feel like these extracurricular activities that they do help them become better students and better young men. We've had, fortunately, we've had four kids in the last three years get full scholarships and one that may end up getting one soon. And I would hate for that not to be able to happen because we don't have athletics. So I'd urge you, I'd plead with you to just get a quick resolution because the longer this drags out, it's going to look bad. It's bad on our City. It's bad for our kids and we just want to move on and end this and make sure that we have the right funds that we need to proceed forward. Thank you.

MS. WESTON: Good evening. I'm Christine Weston. I live at 900 Smithfield Avenue, so I'm Ward 5. I've heard a lot of talk about tonight kind of the opposite end of why we should get funding and everything is very true what everybody says but I want to talk a little bit, a teeny bit about why it's so important that we need this funding. All the politics kind of set aside, I invite every single one of you guys to go on the Department of Education website and take the third grade SOL test. As a teacher, I sat down and I took that test and it took me a while to think through it. We are asking eight and nine year old babies to do this. It takes a whole lot more than one teacher teaching twenty children on about twenty different levels to do that job. So, it's not old school like when you guys went to school. It's a whole new world. Our rigor is ridiculously ridiculous. And I teach kindergarten at Patrick Copeland. I live in Hopewell, my babies go here. I have a fifth grader, I have a third grader and I have a kindergartner. I cannot imagine what it's going to be like when my kindergartner gets in third grade. So we're not being selfish. We're not asking for raises. We are simply asking for you guys to fund the money so we can get our kids successful. That's it. Period. It's not teachers being selfish that we need more money. It's we need these positions that Dr. Fahey has put into the budget, he's made that very well known what he wants to spend the money on. It's, we need them. It's a necessity for us teachers to be able to do our job. So we're not being lazy. We are not asking for raises. We are simply asking for you guys to fund a budget so our kids in Hopewell can be successful. And I happened to look up on our Hopewell's, the screens up there and the very first thing that it said is learn well. It's the very first thing up there. So I just challenge you guys to stand by that; stand by that.

MS. ADAMS: Good evening. My name is McKenzie Adams. I live on 3408 West Broadway Ward 3.

MS. HUDDLESTON: My name is Corinne Huddleston. I live on 3007 Oak Lane.

MS. ADAMS: We are both members and students of the Governor's School. I go to Appomattox Regional Governor's School and Corinne goes to Maggie Walker Governor's School. And I can say that like a teacher I've ever had I would never consider lazy. I mean in middle school I would go to school and I would do the best that I could so that I could apply to the Governor's School and further my

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education. And I still keep in touch with my friends who are on the football team. And I mean, these guys, they play one, because they love it and two, it gets their anger and stress out. So, I mean if you take it away, I mean like what are they going to do? They're going to be out on the streets like angry and stressful. And I mean my school is stressful enough. I'm a sophomore and it's stressful about college but then I think okay, if I played a sport, some families can't even afford college and that's the only way they have. So, yeah.

MS. HUDDLESTON: Like McKenzie said, I attend Maggie Walker Governor's School and I'm a freshman. Not only do I think it's important that we have slots at the Governor's School, I'm very much in touch with my home life. And it's very important to me to see my own brother succeed in his Hopewell schools and to want to see him go to college. And to see all of my friends cheering or playing basketball or playing football; it's just very important. And it comes from nothing but the bottom of their heart and all I can say is that coming through Hopewell's gifted program has changed my life and I know that it's changed a lot of others. Even if they didn't go to the Governor's school. But I can honestly say that the Governor's school is one of the best things that ever happened to me and the gifted program and Hopewell public schools made that happen.

MS. JEFFERSON: Good evening. Madam Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council. My name is Cheryl Jefferson. I reside at 2403 Maple Street in the City. I'm in Ward 6. As a board member, I'm compelled to speak because I think that we have great talent in Hopewell. As far as the athletics, I think that that is the only way that they will be able to attend college on scholarships. I think that our Governor's schools are needed. I served as Vice Chair for Appomattox for a while and I went to Maggie Walker to attend a luncheon with our students there. And I mean just to see these kids in action. And I don't want to neglect our staff, our teachers. They're amazing. My grandchildren, they love their teachers. Ms. Karakov is one. And my grandson, when it was time for him to go to middle school, he wanted to take Carla Pfizer with him, you know. So I mean I think that our teachers and staff, they work well. Our students are very talented. And I am one that want to elect for the fine arts to stay and for our athletics. Thank you.

MR. DAWSON: Mayor Pelham, City Council, some of you know me. For those of you that don't, I'm Mike Dawson. I live in Ward 5. I've done a lot of things for the City. Those of you who know me know what I've done but it's not about me tonight. It's about the kids. I can honestly say that I had Ms. Bujakowski when I was a kid coming up in public schools. My daughter had her at Carter G. in the gifted enrichment program and now she's eligible for the dual enrollment at the John Tyler. I also have a daughter in second grade. There's not a book at DuPont School she cannot read in second grade and it's not because I'm teaching her that. It's because these ladies over here are teaching her that. So if you cut the funding for the schools, granted the sports are important. I mean Coach Irby's a fine example. And I can go further and further. If you look at Prince George you've got Travis Carr, high school graduate from Hopewell. If you look at Monacan, you've got the Henderson boys. You look at Tiller, he just got a head coaching job somewhere else. They're all Hopewell graduates. And they're all going to develop the lives of young men like these boys right here, which I had this young man when he was probably seven. I've coached in little league. I've coached all the way until the high school level. I've done numerous things throughout the City and without the kids, if you take money from them then you're going to rob them to potentially be what you are or what Coach Irby is or what these teachers are or what Ms. Bujakowski was to me as a teacher. I didn't go to college. I joined the service. I wanted to go into the military. But these kids, if you take some of these gentlemen they told you, that's their only way to get to college. Some of them don't have a way out. So that is their way out. If you cut the funding, then you're limiting their potential to become better adults, better citizens and better leaders. That's all I've got to say.

MR. JACKSON: I'm from, I live in 2508 West Broadway. I do not know what Ward I'm in? My name is Doran Jackson. All right, so I just recently moved to the City. And I've been teaching here, this is my

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fourth year now. And one thing that I would like to say as someone who's actually moved to the City as a teacher, which I know I've been to a meeting here before and I heard that was something that was interesting for you all was you wanted more people to actually work and live here. And I would be one of those people. What I would like to see is try to get this City better. Like there are things that we need to change or the City needs to change in order to help make things better and one of those things would be to work together. I've seen that whether that's in the schools or whether that's in the City, you need to work together as a unit to try to make things better. It's exciting for me to see, you know, as a teacher here like McKenzie and Corinne come up here, a couple of other, you see Reggie over there, a bunch of my students here. You know, I've seen them grow, okay, and a lot of them have succeeded because of sports, because of the advanced programs, those things. I've coached softball since I've been here. And there we got, I was late, that's why I'm in the getup because we played Petersburg and we whipped them up pretty good. So I'm pretty excited about that. But anyways, but I've gotten to know from coaching, right, I've gotten to know who these students are on a different level. So as a teacher, it's helped me not only be able to relate better to them but also be able to explain content and be able to motivate them a little better. So, I've seen that. I've got to meet the families of some of these great kids and that's been something that I've, you know, I'm just here, I don't know anybody here except for the people I've met through the schools. And I've met some wonderful people and that's been providing me through sports and through all these programs. So basically I guess in conclusion, I would kind of like to see as I said everybody working together to make this work. And then I do, if I'm not mistaken, I believe home values, your school has a big say in your home values. So I'm just telling you all as a citizen, I wouldn't want to live here if I didn't have sports or if I didn't have advanced programs. So I don't know who else would want to do that. So that being that, thank you very much and I appreciate your time.

MR. PATTERSON: Thank you for allowing me the time to speak Council members. My name is Steve Patterson. I live at 3406 Portsmouth Street, Hopewell, Virginia. Now, I'm not going to stand here before you and pretend like I understand the upper running of a government. I didn't really do that well in that class. But being a father of a beautiful six year old girl and a homeowner, I do understand the inner workings of a household. You use your incoming funds that you have to pay for your bills. With that being said, it is my understanding that the gap for the school budget that you have is a few hundred thousand dollars. I have a reliable source that tells me that the 295 Hopewell corridor gap, you know where the police stop the people and stuff, brings an excess of upward \$100,000 a month, which over the course of an entire year would more than fill the appropriated gap for the funds that you need. So, having that being said, someone once influential to my life and still influential to my life today said that if there's really, truly something you want, you will find a way to achieve that. So if it's true that the Council members do not want to cut these funds, then you will indeed find a way to do it without robbing these kids of their opportunities. Thank you.

MS. GATES: My name is Michelle Gates. I own property at 3313 Clay Street. I live in Stoney Creek, Virginia. I drive 45, 35 minutes here every day, 35 minutes back because I want to work for the school system. I teach the gifted program at DuPont Elementary. But I can see both sides of the spectrum. Both of my children had Ms. Bujakowski. They both went to Hopewell schools, graduated from Hopewell. My husband graduated from Hopewell. My kids were in the gifted program. We afforded them that opportunity to succeed. As educators, it is our job to meet our students where they are, whether they be special needs and we need those positions for those children, or whether it be the gifted children. If you put a gifted child in a general ed classroom, the mindset is the gifted children can succeed no matter what. So, all of your energy goes to bringing up those children that are either lower or average because we have to do it. It's our job. And then the gifted children get left to fend for themselves. We have to keep the gifted program. On the other hand, my son-in-law is a police officer for Hopewell. He was not in the gifted program. He did not have the father figure in his life that he needed all the time. He however, had soccer and Ted Breeden was that man that he needed in his life. If that soccer coach had not been there to support him, David would not be a police officer today. He would have been arrested by a police officer

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instead and he is the first person that will tell you that. He visits our schools. He was at DuPont yesterday. He visits all the schools and he makes himself known to all the children. Our teachers are awesome. I'm a Republican, God knows that Republican that got up here and spoke about the teachers, watch it going out the back door. Because our teachers are amazing. They get their early. They leave late. They care about the children. They cry about the children. I can't tell you the number of times the kids have gone and the teacher is sitting there crying because I've done everything I can. And what's happening, what is happening? We need the support. Our special needs children, our average children, our gifted children, we need the support. And I'm asking you to give us that support.

MR. FRYE: Good evening ladies and gentleman. I'm not going to speak very long because I'm not a big talker. I live on 3828 Cambridge Place. I'm a member of Hopewell high school and I'm also a member of the marching band but today I'm not here to just represent the marching band. I'm here to represent sports and other extracurricular activities after school. Basically, I've been in band for over four years and this is my life. This is something that I would like to do and attend to when I go to college. And I feel that if you take this away, everybody wants to see their kids grow in life and do something big that they would like to do in life. And if you take this away from people's kids, then what would they have forward to look to when they get older? What would their parents be there to encourage them to do? From the one thing that you took them away that they loved the most. So therefore, if you cut basically everything that we put our hard work into and the teachers that's actually stood up here that love their jobs and would lose all their benefits and all their hard work that they put into the students' education to get them to the point where they need to be in life so that when they get to college they will be prepared. So when they get to college that they won't have to go through back and forth looking back well oh, my teacher taught me this thing and my teacher taught me that. So basically, what I'm trying to say is, if you will keep the funds going for the school, and I think that would be a great idea for everybody's kids here to look forward to when they go to college and everything. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I'm not speaking, I don't need to speak for the schools. I work for the schools. I'm the HR director. I've hired more teachers in the past five school years than you have City employees. And we won't go there. I want to talk about the retiree health insurance. There was a comment made earlier that frankly the spouses don't serve. My husband was a police officer here. He's been retired for ten years. He spent six consecutive years on graveyard. He spent seven consecutive years on four to twelve. He worked for a multijurisdictional drug task force and still holds the record for drug indictments for the City of Hopewell. I beg to differ with you. I doubt whether the person who made the comment this evening has on a bulletproof vest and I doubt whether your wife is worried that you'll come home from this meeting. Thank you.

MAYOR PELHAM: Thank you. All right, and as such, we're not making any motions tonight. So are there any ending comments by Councilors? We'll start with Councilor Shornak?

COUNCILOR SHORNAK: I know that this has been stressful time for not only you all but I have missed quite a few sleepless nights worrying over this. And I do feel that we're going to come together after this meeting and we're going to make sure that we do the right thing. The kids are the focus and should always be the focus. And it doesn't make any difference what I think or what anybody thinks, it's about the kids. And that's what our number one priority should be. And I have faith that we're going to come together and we're going to work through this. But we don't need to be spreading, you know, bad things about people. We need to come together and make sure that we make the right choices. And education is always high on my priority list as well as public safety. That should be a high priority on everyone's list. And I assure you, I have taken everybody's comments to heart tonight. I thank you all for coming. I've had many emails, many telephone calls and I have heard you. And that I'm not going to dismiss. I'm going to make sure that my decision will be the best for the citizens of Hopewell and the City itself. Thank you for coming.

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MAYOR PELHAM: Before Councilor Walton comment, Vice Mayor Luman-Bailey. What I want to do is take or make a motion to postpone the regular business to April 28, 2015. I was looking at the wrong agenda regarding City Clerk's resignation and agreement. Would anyone like to second that motion?

COUNCILOR HOLLOWAY: MAYOR PELHAM: ALL IN FAVOR? VOICES IN UNISON: Aye.

MAYOR PELHAM: All opposed? None.

VICE MAYOR LUMAN-BAILEY: Okay, thank you. I just briefly wanted to also thank everyone for coming out and the positive aspect of this is the enthusiasm that has been shown as far as the participation. We have some communication issues. Some people touched on that. There are apparently some communication issues. And that's a bit of a disappointment as far as some people waiting until the eleventh hour to really encourage the participation that we love to see. Council really appreciates your coming out and participating like this. And it would have been wonderful to see this earlier on and I just, I wish that some people had sent out the beacon light to get you hear a month or more ago. And I also wish that teachers had been included more in the discussion. So again, that's a communication issue that we need to work on between the school board and the City Council. So, again, thanks for being here and it was great to hear from the students and the teachers alike.

COUNCILOR WALTON: Yeah, I would like to thank the folks for coming out. I think this has been a healthy debate. A lot of get off your chest a little bit of what's going on in Hopewell and I think we all think the town deserves a good school system, a good public safety and all that. We've got to meter the funds and try to make them stretch and do the right thing. I think people know how I feel about this and I think we can work it out. Thank you.

COUNCILOR GORE: So I also want to thank you all for coming out today. I just want the residents or the families that live within Ward 4 to know that I have been personally diligent with this issue. I met with the superintendent and the budget director this past Friday for a couple of hours. We went line by line through the budget. I met with the finance director and again today going line by line through the budget. I've also been requesting since January a joint meeting with the school board so that way we can have an open dialog about some of the things that was brought up tonight. I've also been responding to calls and emails as well. So I just want the residents in my Ward to know I have been doing my due diligence to make sure that I do my research and I get answers to the questions. And also on top of that, there have been school board members who have requested me to ask questions of our finance director and I have forwarded them and have re-forwarded his response back. So I do want the residents of my Ward to know that I am doing my best to make sure that I get these answers and if you have any questions or anything that you need to do, please contact me. If you want my phone number, it's on the website. If you cannot reach me, you can also send a message to the City Clerk Office. Dr. Fahey has my information as well and he by all means forward them to me. But I think it's important that people in my Ward know that I am working hard for this. And I want to thank everybody for coming out and also there will be an announcement in the newspaper. I'm going to have a Ward meeting to discuss the budget in depth and to have more discussion with residents in my Ward about their needs and their concerns. So be on the lookout for that. I will ask for Public Affairs to post that on our City's website as well. So just keep your eyes peeled. I'll also make sure the school board and Dr. Fahey knows that date.

COUNCILOR HOLLOWAY: Good evening. I would like to thank everyone for coming out, all the students, the community for being here tonight. And we all know that education is important and I would like for us to come on one accord to settle this issue. Thank you.

COUNCILOR ZEVGOLIS: Thank you, Madam Mayor. I, too, want to thank everyone for coming out. And I think everyone knows that I've always tried to support the school system and certainly our citizens

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in Hopewell. I was on the Council for twelve years and we supported every funding project that came from the school. We had a good working relationship with them. We had no problem with them. I heard comments from different teachers in here and I especially want to thank Ms. Bujakowski for staying in the City and living in the City and making a commitment here with her family. And I recall being at the convocation exercise back in the spring or the summer before school started at the high school. And I attended every one when I was on Council for twelve years and I was invited to attend as a former Mayor and I went up there. But anyway, when Mayor Bujakowski at the time talked, he talked about his seven member Council and how they have supported every funding decision that the school had requested in the past four years. And on top of that, they gave the teachers or the school employees a four to five percent increase by way of a COLA or bonus each of those four years. So I don't know where the attitude or the opinion came that all of a sudden the Council is opposed to what the schools do or you know or that. And I kept hearing tonight, I kept hearing it over and over. Please don't cut this or they're cutting this. Council hasn't cut anything. I frankly don't know what a lot of you are talking about when you said they're going to cut the program. Council is not cutting any programs. And I think some of the questions that you're asking as students and parents need to be, excuse me, directed at the school board. The Council, you have to realize, we have a City administration and a City Manager and you have a school administration and a superintendent. They're supposed to get together and get a budget together that is affordable and doable. And then when they get that together, they present it to Council. And this was supposed to be the first hearing on the budget. We set the tax rate at the last meeting. That still has to have a second hearing to go through with the tax rate of a two cent increase. And we've got to have two public hearing readings on the budget. So nothing has been etched in stone and Council has made no decision and has not told anyone that we're going to cut. I had dozens of parents to call me on both sides of the argument. They were alarmed. You all are going to cut the Governor's school out. I said but my information is the Governor's school is good for another year. I don't know how they're going to cut them out. And when the parent heard that, it relieved them right away. They said well, we're glad to hear that. I says well I don't know about cutting, I certainly haven't made any suggestion and I haven't heard it from any one of the Councilors up here that we were going to do this or that. It's a budget process. They've got to present it to us, even as I said earlier, if we pass the budget on the first reading, it can still be amended. It can still be adjusted. And Mr. Haley made that clear in an email letter to the Council members. That no, this is the first hearing and it's to accept any recommendations, any additions, or any input. And then we'll have a second hearing to take care of it. So I know that everybody's on the same page. I'm a product of the Hopewell school system. My daughter is a product of the Hopewell school system. I have a daughter that is in administration in Powhatan Governor's school. So we've got a family that's followed education and I've always supported it. And when I was in business in Hopewell, every single year that I was with my insurance company twenty years, I donated \$300 for the schoolteachers' luncheons. And I donated money from, in my family's name and my own name to build the athletic room, change room. And so we're committed. But I'm not saying hey, hooray for me. Every one of these Council people are committed to doing what's right for the City, for the schools and everyone else. And I'll guarantee that they will come together. The thing I'm going to need help on would be who's going to help me write, will a teacher help me write a letter to a widow that's getting ready to have her taxes raised by two cents and then her assessment came in at \$20,000 higher than it was and she called me the other day begging me to do something about it because she's 86 years old and she wants to stay in her home? And those are the problems we have to face. If we were to give, it was mentioned earlier tonight, you're talking about a 22 cent increase in taxes. You're talking about that's everybody. And all of a sudden I've got to tell her now because of that. And what I didn't like about the way this went about, it kind of divided the people as well as Council, pitted Council against school board, which should never happen by the messages and the telemarketing. That was totally unnecessary. I've never seen that before in my life and I've lived in Hopewell 74 years. I'm a little older than that but I lived in Hopewell for 74 years. And thirteen brothers and sisters went through that Hopewell High School or twelve, including myself. But still, it did alienate and it should have never

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occurred. I've never seen it in my entire life anything like this ever happen the way it did. I guarantee you one thing, it will not happen again in the next three years, whatever it got to if I'm still on Council. And I don't think, and the City Council basically got blindsided. And I just think it was a mistake because I heard things they're going to close the Governor's school, they're going to lose the football. They ain't never going to close that. You're going to have football there for the rest of your life, son. You are. I don't think you're going to see that cut and you're not going to see the arts programs cut or anything else. But there was a lot of things I want to make a point on so that you all do know. Last week, Council was under the understanding that new tax revenue of \$390,000 would be acceptable and to fund at least six positions, maybe not all the school board wanted but good progress. Then we hear directly that the school has sent out a message to parents and citizens that they want \$1.4 million. That was never mentioned to us. Why? It was never mentioned to us. This is the first time we heard it. If the schools get the \$390,000 in revenue, how many positions are going to be filled? Why did the school board not bid out the health insurance this year and accept at such a large percentage increase? Why didn't the school board approach local choice Anthem to provide a quote? Such actions saved the City considerable funds this year. It probably could have saved the school board, too. School administrators were provided a midyear salary adjustment, where did the funding for these raises comes from? And why not use them to offset the pending deficit that we're talking about? What other budget cuts were considered before the decision, if there was a decision made by the school board not by us, to cut all sports, field trips, Governor's school and extracurricular activities? I think this Council needs an answer for that. It's up to the Mayor if she wants to let it be discussed. Madam Mayor? You can do what you want to.

COUNCILOR SHORNAK: Point of order, point of order. Tom, Tom, point of order, I don't think we need to go this –

COUNCILOR ZEYGOLIS: We can discuss this Thursday.

COUNCILOR SHORNAK: I don't think we need to do this. We are getting nowhere by slamming the school board. We will have Thursday to talk about it. Now is not the time to talk and slam the board, the school board.

MAYOR PELHAM: Excuse me. Point, please be cordial, please. And you're out of order, please. We're just summing up our summations for ending comments. Every individual has that time to speak on whatever issue they want to at every end of each one of our meetings. And now it's my turn. I would like to thank everybody, of course again, for coming out. I think it goes without saying that I love children. I love my job. I love Hopewell public schools. I, too, am a product of the 1972 class of Hopewell High School. Kids are dear and near to us and again someone mentioned we just have to work together toward that end and try to unify both parties to come to some type of consensus of what we can share in the budget for the educational process of our children as well as provide for the other aspects of the City that provide services for our citizens. I think a lot of times people don't realize that the average income of a family of four, which is two children and two adults is \$38,000 in Hopewell. If you're a single person, your average income is \$19,500. If it wasn't for the industry, we would be in dire straits for a lot of things. However, we have to compromise and come up with a viable solution for these issues that we're facing. And hopefully, sitting across the table from each other on Thursday and speaking with truths and whatever we can do with the budget, line by line, precept by precept, and come up with a logical conclusion. So again, I thank you for coming out, especially children. Hopefully, you have your alarm set early. Don't miss school tomorrow. And with that, I will take a motion for adjournment.

COUNCILOR ZEYGOLIS: So moved.

COUNCILOR GORE: Second.



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MAYOR PELHAM: All in favor?

VOICES IN UNISON: Aye.

MAYOR PELHAM: Thank you again.

**ADJOURN AT 10:33 P.M.**

*/s/ Brenda S. Pelham*  
Brenda S. Pelham, Mayor

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Cynthia Y. Ames, City Clerk