

# MINUTES

Lowell City Council  
Special Meeting-Budget  
Monday, July 25, 2022, 6:00 P.M.

## I. CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Sandy Railey

Mayor Railey called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those attending in-person were, Councilmembers Phil Bonham, Candy Funderburk, Thomas Gillespie, Joanna Fulbright. Mayor Pro-Temp Travis Smith participated by calling in. City staff included City Manager Scott Attaway, City Attorney John Russell, and City Clerk Cheryl Ramsey.

Mr. Russell went over the procedures allowing Mayor Pro Temp Smith to attend the meeting remotely. He stated that each member, when voting, will have to individually cast their vote.

## II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING

Councilmember Funderburk made a motion to accept the agenda and seconded by Councilmember Gillespie. The vote was unanimously in favor and individually confirmed.

## III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

## IV. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Public Hearing for Consideration of Economic Development Agreement (EDA) for Project Hearth pursuant to 160D-1001.

Councilmember Funderburk made a motion to go into public hearing, seconded by Councilmember Gillespie. The vote was unanimously in favor and individually confirmed.

Mr. Attaway gave a background on the EDA, relative to the NorthPoint development specific to building #3 termed Project Hearth. On November 10, 2020, there was a public hearing on the original EDA for this project within the City of Lowell, as did the City of Gastonia for the portions inside their city limits, and the County Commissioners for the entire property between both municipalities. At that time, an EDA was approved for Northpoint Development. What we are doing tonight is for Project Hearth, the business that is moving into Building #3. Hearth plans to invest a minimum of \$135 million in Building #3 which exceeds the standard for the level 4 grant. He asked Donnie Hicks with the Economic Development Commission to speak about the property and answer questions.

Mr. Hicks also brought Leslie Campbell, Project Manager, with him. Mr. Hicks briefly went over the grant program and welcomed questions. Councilmember Funderburk asked when they will occupy the building. He stated they are waiting on final inspections of the building to put machinery equipment in place. Councilmember Gillespie asked if we did this in November 2020, are we doing the same

thing over? Mr. Hicks said what was done before was for the building alone. Today is for the equipment inside the building.

With no further questions, Mr. Attaway added that there will likely be two more meetings regarding building #8 and a portion of building #7 that is within Lowell. Mr. Hicks added that the City of Gastonia and Gaston County has already approved this EDA.

Councilmember Bonham made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilmember Funderburk. The vote was unanimously in favor and individually confirmed.

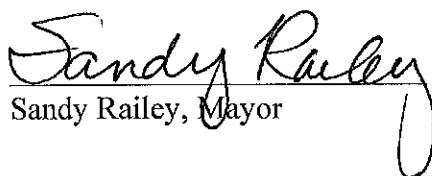
Councilmember Bonham made a motion to approve Resolution RS09-2022 Economic Development Agreement for Project HEARTH, seconded by Councilmember Fulbright. Councilmember Funderburk was concerned about the pay for the workers being kind of low [at \$36,515] and giving tax breaks to them with other taxes increasing with the fire tax and the reevaluation next year. Mr. Russell said in order to discuss this, we would need to go back into the public hearing. Councilmember Fulbright made a motion to go back into the public hearing, seconded by Councilmember Gillespie. The vote was unanimously in favor and individually confirmed. Mr. Attaway addressed the pay rate and said he also asked about the wage. He said the figures are somewhat dated and asked Mr. Hicks to speak on it. He said they have been working on this project for quite some time. The County average is about \$42k/year and \$36k is not out of line for the job classifications. Keep in mind everyone will not make this amount as Management will be included and people making less. The existing workforce in Gaston County can fulfill the 128 positons.

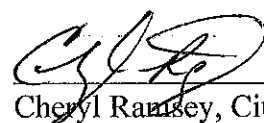
Councilmember Funderburk made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilmember Gillespie. The vote was unanimously in favor and individually confirmed.

Mayor Railey said the original motion is still on the floor. Councilmember Gillespie said the only reason he votes the way he will vote is because people are needing jobs. If this will bring 128 jobs to the City of Lowell that is a good thing. The vote was approved with Mayor Pro Temp Smith and Councilmembers Gillespie, Bonham, and Fulbright stating yes and Councilmember Funderburk stating no.

- V. **ADJOURN** – Councilmember Bonham made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilmember Funderburk. The vote was unanimously in favor and individually confirmed. Adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Sandy Railey, Mayor

  
Cheryl Ramsey, City Clerk