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A Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hickory was held in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building on Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 5:00 p.m., with the following members present:

Brad Lail	Hank Guess	David L. Williams
Vacant	Aldermen	David P. Zagaroli
Danny Seaver		Jill Patton

A quorum was present.

Also present were: City Manager Warren Wood, City Attorney John Crone, Deputy City Attorney Arnita Dula, Assistant to the City Manager Yaidee Fox, Communications and Marketing Manager Dana Kaminske, Communications Specialist Sarah Killian, Governmental Affairs Analyst Sarah Prencipe, Human Resources Director Claudia Main, Executive Assistant Deisy Zavala, and City Clerk Debbie D. Miller

Also present were the applicants: S. Ryan Edwards, Bonita Ferretti, Allen Finley, III, Ralph Griffith, Nancy R. Meek, Cliff Moone, Lou Wetmore, and Charlotte C. Williams

- I. Mayor Guess called the meeting to order. All Council members were present.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Invocation by Alderman Seaver

Mayor Guess welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked each of the eight applicants which were present and had expressed an interest in the unexpired term of the late Vernon Tarlton, Ward 2 Councilmember. He recognized former Mayor Jeff Cline and his wife, Joy who were present. Each of the applicants had the same information shared with them. Each applicant had submitted a letter of interest, a resume and had answered three questions which were the top three challenges facing Hickory. Each Councilmember had the applicant's information at their seat from each of the eight applicants. Council would follow the same rules for each applicant. He explained Council's goal was to keep the time limit to around 15 minutes. Each applicant would have three minutes for their opening statement and City Council would have 10 minutes to be able to ask questions and interview. City Council had prepared questions, and the candidates had received those prepared questions. He advised that Council could also ask any question(s) that he or she chose to ask, they were not confined to asking questions just from the prepared questions. Council was not required by ordinance to conduct the process in this manner, but the entire Council decided to have a process was the best way to move forward. Council would hear the first four applicants and then take a brief recess for 10 - 15 minutes. Then resume the meeting and hear the remaining four applicants. All eight names have been placed in a container. No one knows who will be called first, second, third, and so on. The City Clerk would draw the names and call on that applicant. He asked if any member of Council or Staff had anything to add.

Alderwoman Patton commented when Council ask the questions, because they only have 10 minutes and there are six questions, one from each Councilmember, she asked that the applicants limit their responses to one minute so each one of them gets at least an opportunity to ask one question. If there was more time than they could ask more.

City Attorney John Crone advised Council had talked about starting the question and moving sequentially among Councilmembers. Alderman Lail would ask the first question, etc., regardless of who is there and keep rotating.

Alderwoman Patton advised the second candidate would start with Mayor Guess and go around so each one of them would have the opportunity to ask the first question.

Mayor Guess advised the audience did not have an opportunity during this meeting to ask questions. All the questions will come from Council.

- IV. Interview of Applicants for the Ward 2 Alderman Vacancy

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the first name, Nancy Meek.

Ms. Nancy Meek thanked Council for the opportunity to come before them. She referenced a recent meeting in which she spoke of the chance for Hickory to showcase their compassion and craftsmanship. As she prepared for this meeting she thought she was also a combination of compassion and business. She grew up in a lovely home with lively dinner time discussions. Her mother was a school social worker and her dad a businessman. Her dad owned a family business and later went to work for a public utility, working with economic developers in business and industry as they came to or expanded their businesses in eastern North Carolina. Economic development and compassion was a daily blessing. Balance was a watchword in many of those conversations. How do you help people without making them lose their dignity? Giving back to your community, jobs, careers, quality of life are all subjects that helped educate her for the role as a City Councilmember. She also learned that she doesn't have to have all the answers, but she does have to listen to learn. She was fortunate to have many fine examples of public service all around her. Attitude and desire to serve had been engrained into her whole being and she has tried to honor that legacy. There are many ways to serve a community, volunteerism, elected official, simply helping a neighbor. Her sons continue this tradition and responsibility through their activity duty in military service. All are equally important. Because of that legacy she has the

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opportunity to see matters from a broader perspective. From reading newspaper accounts of her great-grandfather being a town's first German Jew elected to a city council, to giving a neighbor a casserole. She scribes to be rather than to see. She welcomed Council's questions.

Alderman Lail thanked Ms. Meek for her application and he enjoyed reading her resume which was very impressive. She had mentioned her sons, David and Rob, and he knew them well. He knew that Ms. Meek was very proud of them. He commented the question was certainly not about her sons. He asked her what she thought her greatest accomplishment was, and asked her to not say her sons, because they are great guys. He asked her what she would consider to be one of her most satisfying accomplishments.

Ms. Meek commented the relationships that she had built over the years, and starting with a successful happy marriage that produced those two sons. Being able to be a part of a great community and that relationship brought them to Hickory. She continues her relationships even with people from her childhood.

Mayor Guess commented Ms. Meek mentioned specifically businesses and how important businesses are to our community. He asked her how she would best represent the business community.

Ms. Meek commented she sees the business community as a constituent just as much as she sees a citizen as a constituent. She believes that businesses and the City have to work together to weave a fabric that best supports our City and creates jobs for the whole community. She mentioned that she has a business background, as does her family. She understands the struggles of entrepreneurship both large and small. She has that willingness to listen which serves her well.

Alderman Seaver asked what some of the ways were which she would prepare to take on the role as a City Councilmember for the City of Hickory.

Ms. Meek mentioned that she and Alderman Seaver had served on the Hickory City Board of Education together for a little bit. She served on that board for 11 years. She learned for every hour of a meeting there are generally one to four hours of prep time that are required to have the best foundation to make informed decisions when one does come to a meeting. Reading materials, speaking with involved individuals, staff or other elected officials, listening to constituents are the best prep for any decision. Being on the staff of two elected officials helps her to see another side so that she knows the right questions to ask and bring the information necessary to serve both constituents and elected officials.

Alderman Williams commented being on a staff with elected officials, did she have ideas on local government improvements that she felt had not been considered or discussed publicly.

Ms. Meek responded we have some now, and she would like to see more public/private partnerships. She wasn't privy to all of the conversations that Council had either within the formal settings or in closed session or things of that sort. She was certainly open to ideas.

Alderman Zagaroli asked what opportunities and challenges does Hickory face in strengthening economic development efforts.

Ms. Meek replied outside of the challenges she had presented to Council in her packet, she was not quite sure that this meeting would give them the time necessary for that important of a subject.

Alderman Patton asked what Ms. Meek's view was of the role of local government.

Ms. Meek commented local government is closest to the people and therefore must be more responsive to the voices of its citizens. That means being accessible and listening. While no one will ever get exactly what they want from a governmental body, local government has the ability to live closest to the problems and solutions that work best for a balanced community.

Mayor Guess asked if any other Councilmembers had any other questions to ask Ms. Meek. There were none. He advised Ms. Meek add some time left, she would have three minutes for her summation, which was what Council had advertised.

Ms. Meek thanked Council for the opportunity to speak with them. The process had been open and fair and she realized the task was not easy. Council had many fine candidates to choose from. That is one of the best things about Hickory. There are fine people in this City who are willing to pitch in and continue to make it the best it can be. No matter who Council chooses she will continue to serve the City. She is proud of our City and she wants to make sure we are good stewards of what those who have gone before us have handed today's citizens. May we work together to give tomorrow's citizens a City they also can be proud to call home. She thanked Council.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the next name, Allen Finley.

Mr. Allen Finley addressed Council and thanked them for the opportunity. He commended Ms. Meeks and commented that is a hard act to follow. He thought his introduction would be the answer to the first question. The first question was tell us why you are the best candidate for Councilmember for Ward 2. He advised he grew up in Wilkesboro, a small town. His family was public servants, his dad ran for County Commissioner, he was a fireman, and a developer, and

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his mother was an artist. His brother is very involved in city council matters and governmental matters in Wilkesboro, so he is very attached to that. He advised he was the son of a Presbyterian minister and he was also an Eagle Scout, which he was very proud of, public service at a very young age. He had been immersed in many different things in Hickory for 34 years. He moved to Hickory in 1984. He got involved immediately with Hickory Community Theatre and several other community activities. Two years later he opened an advertising agency PR firm. They have been around since 1993. He purchased what used to be Hickory's first bank. Alderman Zagaroli used to own the building back in the dark ages. They had enjoyed being a downtown property owner since 1993. He had served on 22 different boards since then, some governmental in nature and the rest nonprofits and some church boards as well. He got involved with downtown quite a bit with Oktoberfest, Friday Alive, helping to plan and being on those boards. He is a big believer and lover of downtowns. He looks at what Julian Price did with Asheville back in 1991 when they were struggling. He really had the vision to invest his own money and his friend's money (colleagues) to build the city back from the inside out from the downtown, with bookstores, restaurants, coffee shops and of course craft beer, and look what it has done for Asheville. It is an exciting place to be and he sees things like that going on downtown and all through Hickory and it is exciting. He wants to be more involved in that. He was also involved in real estate. He helped develop Moore's Ferry Phase III with the Tarlton Group, Vernon. They miss him, and of course Jim and his family have afforded him a lot of opportunities in the hotel industry, and hospitality industry as well.

Mayor Guess asked Mr. Finley what he thought the best thing that happened in Ward 2 in the last five years.

Mr. Finley thought that was a tough question to answer because he didn't really have anything negative to say, which he was glad to report. A lot of the positive things which had gone on in Ward 2 were really State funded things like the 127 bridge over Lake Hickory, all the improvements there last year. Falling Creek Bridge which is going on now, and the 29th Avenue Bridge were some real positive infrastructure and road oriented things that had happened, but he knew they were State funded. He was glad to see more quality apartments had been built behind Walgreens. He knew that Hickory needed more apartments. One of the challenges in Ward 2 would be more housing that was in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 dollar range. If we are going to create jobs and bring high-tech industry here, people need a place to live. He would love to work more toward those price ranges.

Alderman Seaver commented Mr. Finley was in the communication business pretty much too. He asked what some unique ways were in communicating to the citizens and other governmental bodies in the area were and for some ideas that he might have.

Mr. Finley thought the City was doing a pretty good job now with the website, PR, social media some, he still hears a lot of people asking what is going on with the bond projects. When is that going to be complete? How is our money being spent? Sometimes he wonders if a lot of people are sleeping under rocks, because he thought the City did a good job communicating that with newsletters, websites and things. Maybe even more social media, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and email just to get the word out even more to let people know what is going on, not only with the bond projects, City Walk, art walk and all of that but in general.

Alderman Williams asked regarding the constituents, what types of ways would Mr. Finley keep them informed or stay in contact with them.

Mr. Finley responded through social media. He advised he was very active on a lot of boards now and he talks to a lot of business owners, marketing directors, and owners of manufacturers on a daily basis because of his job. He felt like he was already very visible and he would continue to do that. He referenced Mayor Wright who gave out his cell number to everybody. He would not be opposed to that. He is right downtown. A lot of people knows where he is and he hardly ever, if ever, shuts the door to his office. It is always an open forum so to speak. He is very involved in social media. He has a 20 year old daughter so she keeps him very abreast as to what is going on with Instagram, Snapchat, and all the social media aspects. He has 3,700 - 3,800 friends on Facebook, and 2,000 contacts on LinkedIn. He is very involved in social media as well. Stay visible and being all ears at all times.

Alderman Zagaroli asked what the three most pressing concerns facing the City of Hickory in 2018 and beyond were.

Mr. Finley commented we need to attract more high-tech, innovative, cool jobs for the 22-35 year olds. That goes without saying. We still need to keep working hard at that. The opioid crisis epidemic. That is at the forefront of everybody's minds and he hopes that we can continue or start taskforces or committees to attack that issue. He had heard of a lot of friends, especially in the Wilkesboro/Wilkes County area, it is not only here it is all over the place. He knew firsthand how that could work. He would like to get involved with that. Finishing all of the bond projects, that goes without saying. Book Walk, City Walk, Art Walk. He advised he is also on Bob Lackey's Board at the Lackey Conservatory on the lake. He thought that was unbelievably cool, nice, and amazing. He referenced the flyover video. It is going to put Hickory on the map. He wants to continue to be involved in things like that. Those were his top three challenges.

Alderwoman Patton asked what topics that he would need to educate himself on prior to assuming his new role as far as budget, zoning, bonds, and personnel.

Mr. Finley replied all of them, just to be honest. He wants to dive in and roll up his sleeves. And learn. He doesn't profess to be an expert at everything that Alderwoman Patton mentioned. He

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thought that he was very clear about what was going on with the bond projects. He advised he was on two or three of those boards as well as the Public Arts Commission. The Public Arts Commission had also gotten involved with some of that also in an adjunct kind of way. He thought that was the only thing that he wouldn't really need to be doing a whole lot of reading on, or getting up to speed on. But budgeting and things like that, absolutely he would need to roll up his sleeves and learn.

Alderman Lail asked how he would see himself working with other Councilmembers if they were trying to drive to a decision and there is disagreement.

Mr. Finley responded he is really good with working with committees and on boards. His day to day job is doing just that, working with usually more than one person. He felt like he is open eared and open-minded. He knew most of Council, but needed to get to know Alderman Williams, and Mayor Guess better. He felt like he knew the rest of Council very well and he felt very comfortable in talking, working, and relating with them. He didn't see that as a problem.

Mayor Guess asked Council if anyone had any follow ups. He advised Mr. Finley he would have the last few minutes to close it out anyway he chose to. The rules were three minutes, so he would have three minutes.

Mr. Finley commented he summed everything up at the beginning. He advised he had a long list of boards, but he felt like he had talked about that too much maybe. But being involved with the Chamber was great. He reflected on things which had happened over the last 20-30 years being in Hickory. We are Hickory, he referenced himself, his wife and daughter. He mentioned his wife was an educator and had been for over 30 years. She is probably going to teach in the public schools maybe one more year. She is an art, vocal, drama instructor. He felt like he was connected in listening and hearing at the grassroots level about what is going on in our schools. He felt like he could bring a lot to the table with what he knows and what he has heard from kids, his wife, other instructors, other teachers and principals. He thought we had good schools, but they could be better. Lenoir-Rhyne, unbelievable, CVCC great. We have a lot to offer other businesses that want to move here. He summarized, they love Hickory, they have been here, they are not going anywhere, and they are passionate about it. They want to see it grow responsibly. He moved here from Charlotte. He didn't think anyone wanted to sit in Charlotte traffic. He didn't want to see it get that big, but responsible growth, good schools, and good jobs. He is all about getting behind that. He would love to be part of it. He thanked Council.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the next name, Charlotte Williams.

Ms. Charlotte Williams thanked Mayor Guess and the Councilmembers who she knew fairly well over the years working together in different capacities, also Attorney Crone, and City Manager Warren Wood, and staff who she knew very well. She was honored to be here. She thought there were a great group of applicants and it reflected that we have people in this community that are involved and are concerned about moving Hickory forward. She has been here almost 25 years now. She moved here from outside the area, but as soon as she landed here, having young kids, she immersed herself in the schools and other community groups. She advised she is with Lenoir-Rhyne University. She started teaching there shortly after she moved here. She was very enthusiastic about submitting her application. She felt the progression of her career from her professional life. She had actually worked in local government/municipal government for the City of Chicago. She did the job of everyday management. She also served in public office. She has the combination including the connection with a lot of the nonprofit boards as well. Through all of her professional and civic affiliations she has played leadership roles in establishing programs that require relationship building. She felt that was probably one of her biggest strengths. Looking at how we can look at different organizations and people within those organizations to create something outside of that. When she served as Assistant Deputy Mayor for the City of Chicago many of the departments that she worked with are the same that the City of Hickory oversees; police, fire, library, and animal control. It gave her insight into the day to day operations but also into the complexities. She thought about this as a parent before she joined the school board. There is a lot to sit back and not be happy with and sometimes that is why you join boards or commissions, or councils. Once she was on that other side of the table she realized how complex it was to develop policies and to really serve everybody instead of just different constituencies. She felt the combination of her public service as well as professional life, and her teaching/academic career had really prepared her for sitting in the Council seat. She would be honored to be a part of moving Hickory forward and being able to work with all of Council. She thought there was a lot of exciting things happening. She thought that Hickory has so much to offer and we are really just at the cusp, at the beginning of being able to see true development and to really take Hickory to that next level.

Alderman Seaver was very impressed with all the candidates they had. It wouldn't bother him if they put them all in a hat and pulled one out. He thought they would be in good hands. It is so close, in his mind, having to choose one of the applicants to fill the position.

Ms. Williams joked they could take turns and rotate.

Alderman Seaver commented if Council makes a decision that the citizens don't like they could change that around here. He asked Ms. Williams to tell Council why she was the best candidate for Ward 2.

Ms. Williams reiterated she has the knowledgebase about city government, but she also has the public office perspective. She knew that City Council does not mettle in the day to day. That is Warren Wood's job. He is the manager who manages. She thought being here for so many

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years and being part of a lot of different community groups throughout Hickory. She stressed as a school board member she was the at-large member. Even though she represented her district which was fairly similar to Ward 2, she served and was elected by the whole City of Hickory to serve on the school board. In that capacity she got to know every single sector and segment of the City. She thought the way the structure is setup as at-large members, each Councilmember is really responsible for the whole City even though we represent our Ward in elections and there are immediate constituents. She thought that was what she would bring. She had worked in the Ridgeview area, Viewmont area, Claremont area, and Lenoir-Rhyne. She felt she had a sense of what is going on and what is needed and has relationships in all of the different areas and communities of Hickory.

Alderman Williams asked what her ideas were on improvements Council could do as a local government.

Ms. Williams responded the Bond Commission, that was 2014/2015, looking at the challenges of losing the young population, and manufacturing jobs. The City really did a good job and took a stand to try to ignite economic development. The Bond Commission really articulated a lot of the areas we need to see growth and attracting of new businesses. That is just the beginning, \$40 million dollars sounds like a lot, but it is really just seed money to start and be a catalyst to really try and run businesses, retain young people. She referenced Mr. Finley's presentation, attracting high-tech jobs. It really will take more than just having "carrots" to attract companies here. In order to really attract high-tech jobs we need some high-tech workers too. She thought Council really needed to look at education as a big part of that, K-12 education as well as higher education, so that we have the workforce to be able to fill those jobs. We have that level of attractiveness for different companies to come settle here. That is not just workforce, but that is quality of life, parks and amenities as well. Other challenges that she mentioned, obviously we do have some challenges including the opioid crisis. This is a public designation that we have. She thought we need to take it seriously not just because of what we see happening in our communities but because we are being recognized as having that issue. She thought there was a lot that we could do to work together, again, with different segments, the medical community, the mental health community, and schools to educate parents and students and to come up with some solutions for that as well.

Alderman Zagaroli asked what the three most pressing concerns were facing the City of Hickory. He thought she had discussed two of those concerns already. He asked what the main concern was that she thought Hickory was facing in 2018 and beyond.

Ms. Williams responded the main concern we have is we have a lot to offer. We have a lot of things going for us. She advised she also says this about Lenoir-Rhyne University as well, we are our own best kept secret sometimes. She referenced the latest designation of "One of the Best Places to Live", which was in National Geographic, a small town city of our size. She thought some of it needs to ring to our community that pride. Every sector of our City to say, "I live in Hickory and I like living in Hickory". That is part of retaining our young people as well. Make sure we are addressing the needs of everybody and to be able to sell this City. She thought we could. She thought we have all of the components to sell it. We still haven't marketed it the way we should. That is where she felt we need to go.

Alderwoman Patton asked Ms. Williams what her view was of the role of local government.

Ms. Williams replied oftentimes she thought a lot of people don't even get involved in local government. They think if you are going to be looking at policy changes you have to look at the County, State and Federal government. The most significant change that occurs that would affect everyday life for people in a community takes place in local government. She thought the role of local government was to really respond at that level to the various neighborhoods, the various needs and to have vision on where you are going. Not just respond in terms of that pothole or crosswalk, which we hear a lot about, but also look to the future in what we need beyond the immediate, but to say where do we want to be and what do we need now to get to where we want to be.

Alderman Lail mentioned in her introduction something that he experienced when he came on the board which was when you are not a member of a governing board decision making looks rather easy. It is relatively black and white. Once you get behind, in this case, this desk, those decisions become much more complex and nuanced. It is dramatic or it has been in his experience. Occasionally you will even have the situation where there is this tension between what you sense is the will of the constituents and it is counter or against what is in the best interest of the City. He asked how she would go about reconciling that tension as part of her decision making.

Ms. Williams commented you go back to the purpose in our role. If it is to serve the constituents, which it is, you need to reopen, listen, and see what it is the constituents want. She thought you did get it to roll sometimes. She knew it happened on the school board where you have more information about certain situations and resources that the general public doesn't have. Sometimes those conflicts occur because they don't have the full picture. She felt a dialogue needs to take place to really listen to why they want what they want and then to see and compromise. If there is something a community really wants or the City of Hickory that is part of the policy making job too. To say "wait maybe we can make this work". To have the dialogue saying, okay look at our budget. All of the City's documents and everything is transparent and public. Let's look at this budget. You can't have everything. If we want our basic City services to stay at that same level we have to compromise, we can't do that, maybe in the future. Maybe we can look for a grant or other funding. Having that dialogue to be transparent in why it can't be

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done and to work together. Not just have government do it, but as we talk, private/public partnerships need to be examined more and more. If there is something the community wants, it is not just Council's job to do it. Community leaders need to go out too and try and secure those funds.

Mayor Guess commented that Ms. Williams had specifically mentioned relationship building in her opening statement. He asked her what the most important steps were that the City could take to enhance its relationship and communication of the business community.

Ms. Williams thought the City had a very strong and good relationship with the business community. She thought it was difficult to look at the business community in lump sum or in one entity. The needs and desires of small business, "mom and pop" stores, are different than larger corporations, international companies, which we do have locally still here. You need to garner those relationships at all levels. Downtown has had some tweak issues with the bond and some of the improvements that were going to take place downtown. She thought it was very good for Council to be responsive and say maybe we need to relook at parking and some other issues relating to business at that level. Then also using the Chamber and other organizations, really continue to build those relationships as well.

Mayor Guess advised Ms. Williams she had three minutes for closing and she could say anything she would like.

Ms. Williams closed out by saying serving as the Ward 2 Councilmember would give her the opportunity to utilize her passion for public service and civic engagement to benefit Hickory and its ability to grow and build on its excellent traditions. She emphasized we do have excellent traditions. The branding that occurred the last few years has been great. Looking at "Well. Crafted." with our furniture history and then to work with all of Council. She would love to see them all work together to try and bring us to that next level.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the next name, Ryan Edwards.

Mr. Ryan Edwards thanked Council and appreciated the opportunity to pursue the vacancy of the Ward 2 seat. He was conscious of the unfortunate reason which it was open and was respectful of that. He grew up in Lincolnton and came to Hickory at Lenoir-Rhyne. He graduated in 1997. He realized he wanted to establish his self and move back to Hickory. He did so after pursuing his Masters at Appalachian State. He married a Hickory native, the former Amanda Carter and they have two very active young boys, Grant age 10, and Carter 6. They are proud to call Hickory home. He is an entrepreneur. He formed his business in Hickory in 2008. They are a growing firm and pride themselves on creating a level of trust with their clients. They do this through listening and with good communication. Quality is beneficial, not only to his business, but also that will serve him well in the occupancy of this seat as well. He felt he set his self apart because he is old enough to have solid community service and business experience, but young enough, in his early 40's, to connect with the younger professionals as well. Through his experiences and time he has had the opportunities to make connections throughout the City with people of different backgrounds and different groups. His background most recently consist of leadership stance, as he is the current President of the Piedmont Educational Foundation Bears Club at Lenoir-Rhyne. He also served as the first chair of the University City Commission formed by the City of Hickory and still serves there today. They have made great strides in bridging the gap between Lenoir-Rhyne and the City of Hickory in creating synergies and cross promoting events, both on campus and here throughout the City with the faculty, staff and students. They are very proud of that. In the past he had also served on the Chamber Board and he was a founding member of the Hickory Young Professionals, and he has also been a part of other organizations in the past which Council saw on his application. He looks forward to Council questions as they get to know him and understand his qualifications better.

Alderman Williams asked if Mr. Edwards was chosen as a Councilmember what would be his ideas of staying in touch with his constituents and keeping them involved and informed on important local issues.

Mr. Edwards advised he looked to continue his activity within the community. Attending events, which he does today, and making sure that he ask questions of both the constituents and also inform himself by conversations with City staff so he knows how to answer people the right way. He thought it was always important if you don't have the answer that you always let the person know that you will help them find that answer to either their question or concern. He commented it is pretty easy for him to be active, not only within his business, but chasing around two boys and their activities throughout this City. He interacts with a lot of people.

Alderman Zagaroli asked what opportunities and challenges does Hickory face in strengthening economic development efforts.

Mr. Edwards replied that is some of the challenges that we face. Making sure that our process is articulated with the business community to help new entrepreneurs here, but also existing businesses. Either expand the opportunities through the permit process or if he has the idea of setting up another office. What would that look like? The way you articulate that is reaching out. We obviously have the pieces in place. Reaching out to the business community maybe through the Chamber and through the various commissions to make sure that we are in touch not only at the website but communicating that verbally as well with the business community.

Alderman Patton asked what the topics were that he would need to educate himself on prior to assuming the new role.

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Mr. Edwards responded obviously appropriate matters such as personnel, budget, and planning as well. He thought the true answer was an overview of each department to make sure he is clear in his thinking of each department's role and just a better understanding of the General Fund, some of the Community Development Block Grants, things such as that to make sure he is knowledgeable in those areas.

Alderman Lail asked if Mr. Edwards had any specific goals that he would like to accomplish or have Council accomplish.

Mr. Edwards advised he had mentioned some things in his application process. The three that comes to mind was communication of progress. We do a great job of that through the website and some of the social media. He found in working with particularly the University City Commission and within his own business, when it comes to social media it is in front of people but they actually have to have it show up in front of them to read it. Maybe some strides could be made there. Push notifications, but also a grassroots efforts. Reaching out to some organizations. He would be happy to take part in that as well as the Councilmembers, kind of "boots on the ground" talking to various organizations and giving them updates as well. Some of that takes place already but just a concerted effort to do that. Also promoting our City is a great opportunity and we have such a great location. It is centrally located. We have 321, 140, very close to 177, and 185. We do a good job of promoting but Hickory is a good stop as well once we get them here he thought there was a good chance that they could hear our story. Another goal would be clearly articulating the function of the City government. To make sure if there are concerns out there what the role of the City is in the particular concern or question. He thought clearly articulating that would go a long way.

Mayor Guess was interested in hearing Mr. Edwards' perspective as a business owner. What could the City do to better enhance and grow our business community?

Mr. Edwards commented he had touched on that, but he thought it was so important, he wasn't just going to come up with some iconic idea either. We have a lot of very well qualified staff people and everyone on Council. In terms of how to, he reiterated the fact that making sure we articulate the processes that the City has in place for a new business working. Have it completely laid out. If someone comes in with an idea, planning or zoning or whatever the appropriate department, that someone interacts with them. Here is what we can expect. As a business owner he doesn't like surprises. He doesn't like surprises at all. If we can help guide an existing business or a new business that is coming to our town, if we can help them in that, they leave out of that meeting saying "They have their stuff together. I feel good about this." He thought that would give them the confidence to move forward.

Mayor Guess advised Mr. Edwards he could make his closing statement as well.

Mr. Edwards thanked Council for the opportunity. He loves this community. For as long as he can remember sports has been a big part of his life. He has always been on a team for as long as he can remember and he would value the opportunity to be a part of this team. He offered his service to the community. He reiterated that he set his self apart because he is old enough to have had solid community service experience and business experience, but young enough, in his early 40's, to connect with those younger professionals as well. He was confident in his ability to add value to Council's team. He appreciated the opportunity.

Mayor Guess recessed the meeting at approximately 5:56 p.m.

Mayor Guess reconvened the meeting at approximately 6:11 p.m.

Mayor Guess advised he had inadvertently left Alderman Seaver out of the last question. It wasn't intentional.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the next name, Ralph Griffith.

Mr. Ralph Griffith thanked Council for the opportunity. He advised he was Dr. Ralph Griffith, a teacher and a millennial. He had the pleasure of lecturing in everything from community colleges, to summer gigs at Oxford, Stanford and Yale Universities. He has the opportunity every day to train young men and women to be problem solvers and to prepare the next generation of leaders. He knows education and young people. He advised he was an economic development expert. His MBA and doctorate in entrepreneurship are coupled with almost two decades of business development and commercialization successes. He has had over 15 commercial successes at the Lenoir-Rhyne Business Incubator that he directs and he has owned a number of various startups himself. He knows entrepreneurship and economic development. He was empathetic. He was born in 1981, the oldest of four children. As a first generation college graduate his bachelor's degree was a tough endeavor. He commented only individuals that have eaten government pork from a shiny silver can could understand the type of poverty he and his family endured when he was growing up. He knows what it means to struggle and he knows the value of hard work, taking responsibility, breaking the mold, and trying new things. He believed that in order to round-out the City Council team for the large impressive tasks before them they would need five key areas of competency. 1) Council will need a millennial that can guide the efforts to attract a generation of people who have left in droves and who have not been replenished. He advised his wife is a PhD research scientist. They are the exact target market, young, educated, and unafraid. He was voted "Top 10 under 40 in Hickory" in his very first year in town because he builds great relationships. He consistently under promised an over delivered with committees like the Edison Project, TEDx Hickory, Global Entrepreneurship Week, and many others. 2) This

position needs an economic development expert who must understand the inter-workings of not just financial markets but the science of economics and project management in order to build strategic plans that have direct impact on economic development and can be measured and assessed over time. He understands both the business and the economics of this task. 3) Council needs somebody with a unique perspective. It can be difficult to attract retirees, veterans, and young people from the far reaches of this Country if you've spent most of your adult life living in Hickory. There is more than enough institutional history represented on City Council. You need objective perspective that originates from outside of Hickory to help shake the rust from our lens and to contribute new thoughts and ideas to the team. 4) Council needs someone that has a demonstrated track record for being involved and adding value. He had represented the City on the University City Commission, the Business Development Committee, and the Bond Implementation Commission and partnered with teams from across Hickory including the Chamber, the Hickory Crawdads, the City of Hickory, CVCC, the Small Business Center, Small Business Technology and Development Center, and the Manufacturing Solutions Center, just to name a few of those. He knows the importance of building collegial and working relationships. 5) Council needs an entrepreneur. He didn't mean a small business owner. They're two very, very different things. He means an entrepreneur. They see obstacles as opportunities and while most people are running away they run towards the fire. They look for opportunities to identify root causes, to create a plan to solve the problem indefinitely and they get things done. He advised these were the specific areas of competency that make the most ideal candidate for the Ward 2 vacancy. He was best prepared to help City Council with the tough decisions ahead. He wants to be a part of the team and he wanted Council's vote.

Alderman Zagaroli commented that Mr. Griffith was obviously very qualified to tell Council about the opportunities and challenges that strengthening specifically the City's economic development efforts.

Mr. Griffith thought they were one in the same. He thought the key was entrepreneurship. Some of the short side in this has been entrepreneurship. It cost a lot of money and it takes a lot of incentives to attract big businesses into our community. And if, and when, it works or doesn't work for them, or Mecklenburg attracts them away, there is greater incentives elsewhere, they just pickup ship and they go elsewhere. We need to grow our own. Entrepreneurs stay where they have been given opportunity to grow. They dig very, very deep roots. We have an opportunity to start growing our own which is much more economically feasible actually than trying to attract others to come into our community creating opportunities like he did. He advised he had sat with, Council, Andrea Surratt, and Dave Leonetti talking about repurposing the old Soup Kitchen into an economic development space. He could start volunteering his time and some of his colleague's time to start helping people, in particular the engineers, the blue collar, and the skilled trades people who could start their own companies. We can do that. We absolutely can do that but we are missing an opportunity to do that. He thought that the great work that Warren Wood and his team was starting to look into that space in terms of economic development and bringing that a little bit in-house was going to be a key to turning from an opportunity to an actual plus.

Alderwoman Patton asked what his view was of local government.

Mr. Griffith commented he had sat in Council Chambers and listened to people talk about chickens, and how many chickens we are allowed to have inside of our yards. He had listened to passionate people pray and talk about various topics. Just outside of Council Chambers you can pay your water bill. It is a very special place. Local politics and local government is such a special, special place. One word he had written was accessibility. The fact that he could pay his water bill in the same space and walk right across and listen to policy that is going to impact him and his children and neighbors is really a special, special place. For us to be able to have the accessibility to work as a team in the space is really powerful. Very powerful. State politics, regional politics, National and federal politics seems very far away. This feels close. He sees Council out to dinner, and they cross paths in cars occasionally, and that is something very, very special. He would like to be a big, big part of what we are trying to do here in the community.

Alderman Lail commented in Dr. Griffith's discussion on the problems facing the community he had talked some about incentives and incentivizing. Just like he had talked about the Soup Kitchen, the skilled trades' people, the local folks. To the exclusion of large corporate incentives. Alderman Lail had looked up online the biggest corporate incentives in North Carolina recently. It was crazy. It was Google, Facebook, it is Nucor Steel. These are companies that clearly don't need incentives. Council finds themselves in a very difficult role, because without playing that game of incentives they are not on an even playing field when these large companies, which do bring tremendous tax base and large opportunity for workers, when they are seeking relocation. He asked how he would reconcile his position. Would he support tax incentive policy for large corporations if he was on City Council?

Mr. Griffith thought business and he teaches this to people all of the time in conversations. Business is an art form. If there was an answer, then everyone would do it. If there was a black and white, yes and no, then everyone would. He would have to look at the opportunity, valuation, the relationship, the deal that has been struck with them to better appreciate that. He advised it is less expensive to grow your own than to attract big businesses into our space. If we allow businesses to come here organically, and we have examples of this, create a bedrock for entrepreneurship people will come into our space. He referenced a company at Manufacturing Solutions Center. They have approximately \$10 to \$12 million dollars right now in new venture cap dollars. He has started to observe this company as they are growing. This gentleman has come from Seattle, Washington, relocated all the way here to be with us because they are taking advantage of our resources and what we have in terms of textile manufacturing and high-tech

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textile manufacturing. If you build a space where people want to come and utilize our strategic competitive advantages, the skillsets and the availability, and access to labor and transportation. He referenced Paul Thompson and what he had done with Transportation Insight. They are taking advantage to assets that we have here on the ground. He didn't know how much "dazzling" you could do to try and get companies here. Sooner or later if their people aren't happy they might go away, which has happened to us. We need to better understand what our strategic competitive is and why companies would want to come here and stop throwing less incentives at them and get more people to come through who want to be here and we can start brokering deals for companies instead of trying to wrangle companies to come here. When he sees big companies like Facebook, and Google it is fun to name those names, but are they scalable. Are they really big companies bringing in enormous money that are staying in our community? Maybe, maybe not. He had not seen all of the numbers. He knew that data centers traditionally don't employ a lot of people. They utilize actually cheap real estate and lots of sun. They are actually taking advantage of us if anything if you want to look at it that way because it is too expensive to build data centers in other areas. Looking at that and leveraging those deals and seeing what more we can do with what we have as opposed to heavily leveraging relationships and trying to barter and get them into these places.

Mayor Guess asked what the best or worst thing that had happened in Ward 2 in the last five years.

Mr. Griffith responded he believes in people. Genuinely people. The best thing and the worst thing that had happened in Ward 2 had both to do with people. He thought the best thing that ever happened in that space was Bruce Meisner. He had had numerous opportunities to talk to him and learn about that and his tenure on City Council and to build that community and to be a leader and a role model on Council and how to be a good servant to the people but also drive policy and have initiatives that you are pushing for. That really paid the way for people like Alderman Tarlton to be successful in that role. One of the worst things that happened was the loss of Alderman Tarlton. He didn't have the closest relationship with Alderman Tarlton, but he knew his son. He goes to Lenoir-Rhyne University and is educated in their computer science program. He got to know Alderman Tarlton almost vicariously through his son Jim. It was a really great relationship in that way. He thought some of the best things and worst things that come out of a place was just people. It is short sided and a terrible loss for their Ward, but he thought, he knows, and he believes that someone within their team will be the person to fill that vacancy and be able to continue the legacy that Alderman Meisner and Alderman Tarlton had both set for them.

Alderman Seaver asked Mr. Griffith what some ways were they he would use to sell Hickory to someone, various age groups, at this time. We are in a growing process with all of the projects we have going on. He asked what he would specifically do to sell Hickory to someone who was looking for a nice place to visit whether they be retired, or young.

Mr. Griffith used something called design thinking in all of the projects that he had ever built. What they do as opposed to pushing products out into the marketplace they ask the marketplace what they want from them. What problems do you exhibit and how can they best solve those problems. He learned a longtime ago, his dad always said, you have two ears and one mouth for a reason. Start to listen to people. The more you listen to people the more you better understand their problems and you can start to generate solutions utilizing what resources that you have at your disposal. He thought it was short sided sometimes to say, we get into a room and we assume what people want and we start working towards this end. He thought if we start to have focus groups, better understanding why veterans and retirees and young people are coming into our community. When he came into this community he could remember Jeff Neville saying, why did you move here? Tell me more about why you came here. Starting to build a repository of better understanding the marketplace and why they might come here can allow us to build opportunities for them to come into the space. He thought you could market it all you want and tell the people all of our stories, but if they are not biting we have got to change the bait and we have got to be very reactive to that. He thought if we went outside of our boundaries and start asking people, set our focus groups, they could work with various marketing teams that are experts in this. Start asking people around the Country, would you move to Hickory? Yes or no. If yes, why would you move there? If no, why aren't you moving there and what would they have to have for you? Very simple questions would give us a treasure trove of information to make great decisions.

Alderman Williams commented as Mr. Griffith had mentioned the millennial generation, his generation, Mr. Griffith's generation, what would he do to keep everyone in the millennial age group informed and keep them engaged in what is going on throughout the City and get them involved in local government.

Mr. Griffith thought there were great entities in place right now, things like Hickory Young Professionals, via the Chamber, is a great resource to begin with. Early in his political science career when he was first educating he was always enamored, completely enamored by FDR. He was one of his favorite Presidents of all time. He did something called fireside chats. Just give them an opportunity to sit down and tear down all barriers and have open and honest dialogue with people. He looked forward to that opportunity of just having that space, whether it is a local church or something. Setting a consistent meeting time and every month, maybe every two weeks, and just sit down and learn and listen to young people and better understand where they are going. Why they are leaving our community? What would keep them here? And again, just asking questions. Open ended questions. People will tell you their whole life story. You will learn more about their needs and what they need from a community and then allow him to convey

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that back to their team and they start building solutions based on that evidence that people are giving us. Just being completely connected to them.

Mayor Guess advised Mr. Griffith he could give his closing statement as well.

Mr. Griffith replied this position is not a hobby or what he might do in retirement. This was his passion. This was a calling from his community to use his God-given talents to be part of a team committed to making Hickory a better place to live. Almost all of the distinguished colleagues and applicants had outlined economic development as one of their top priorities for our community. He was a classically trained and an educated economic expert. He had owned, operated, sold, and grown businesses his entire life. As Mr. Wood builds new departments to help tackle this area we'll need as many economic experts as possible in order to interpret and to help implement the great work of our City Manager and his Staff. He advised he volunteers about 150 hours annually in local businesses. Companies like Safe Harbor, Scents of Hope, Unique World Gifts, Hickory Museum of Art and many others. He knows the businesses and the economics of our City. He is a millennial and the exact target market. He offers a unique and non-provincial look at some of Hickory's toughest problems. He is an entrepreneur and a seasoned problem solver. His work has been featured in Forbes and is unequivocally benefiting the organizations which were willing to give him a chance and an opportunity to demonstrate his abilities. He asked for Council's vote. He would redouble his efforts to maintain focus and positivity work in a civil and collegial manner with each and every City Councilmember and City employee. He intends to donate a majority of his salary from this position to nonprofits in and around the community. He believed that as leaders they have a responsibility to model positive behaviors to our young and impressionable men and women. We have a tough task ahead of us and he is the candidate that has the humility, energy, perspective, knowledge and the ability to add substantial value to the City of Hickory, City Council and Ward 2. He thanked Council for their time and consideration.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the next name, Cliff Moone.

Mr. Cliff Moone thanked Council. Having read the statements of the other candidates for appointment to the Ward 2 City Council seat it was clear that Council had before them a varied group of involved citizens, all of whom care about the future of Hickory. Regarding his own qualifications for serving on City Council, he had attended almost every Council meeting since 2009. He had listened to and sometimes spoken to the many important decisions Council had to make as they represent the citizens who elected them and look to City Council to provide leadership and vision to build a City that exemplifies "Life. Well Crafted." A few years ago he and others successfully advocated for moving the "Persons Desiring to be Heard" to the front of the agenda and for video recordings of the Council meetings. He believed these changes had been positive in making citizen comment more relevant to the agenda and for giving more citizens access to Council decisions. Serving on the Bond Implementation Commission had been a true privilege as had been chairing the Citizens Advisory Committee. Indeed after advocating for the passage of the bond referendum, as a member of the boost Hickory campaign, he started attending Bond Commission meetings from the very beginning, even before being appointed to the commission. To be a member of this commission provides an opportunity to be a part of the planning process but even more importantly to be an advocate for the projects and a bridge for community input which allows the commission to effectively advise City Council. That is why at each Citizens Advisory Committee meeting he reports on the progress being made on the bond projects and solicits input from those on the committee. He also encourages committee members to share this information with their neighbors and friends. Serving on the Citizens Advisory Committee as well as the Habitat board and making recommendations to the Council as to the effective utilization of CDBG funds has given him insight into the problems associated with our aging housing stock and our need to focus on affordable housing and homeownership, which he knew was one of the priorities of the Council's Action Plan. Serving on the Greenway Transportation Advisory Board had brought him a better understanding of our present and future transportation needs. Graduating from Neighborhood College enhanced his appreciation for the complexity of City operations and the daily impact of various City departments on each of their lives. These and other civic activities had been a way for him to contribute to the betterment of the City his family chose to live in 30 years ago when he came here to pastor a local congregation. He did not grow up here, but he is indeed a Hickory by choice family and continues to be so as his eldest daughter and her husband now own a business and are raising their family here. He thanked Council for their consideration for appointment to the Ward 2 council seat. He asked for their vote. If appointed he promised to give his full and unreserved time and effort. It would be his fulltime job to working with each Councilmember for the best possible Hickory.

Alderwoman Patton asked what the topics were that Mr. Moone felt he would need to educate himself on. She knew he had been through Neighborhood College, but was there a topic that he would need to really hon in on.

Mr. Moone commented going to Neighborhood College is really something that everybody in this City ought to do. It does give you a much broader perspective and a focus perspective on the actual things that the different parts of the departments of our City. He thought there was like 45 departments in this City, so you get a real sense of what goes on in there and who works there and the quality of the people that we have hired to do the work and who lives here. When he looked at that on the list of questions the first thing he thought of, even though he had heard a lot about it, was to know more about Code Enforcement and how that Code Enforcement is a piece of what happens in the City effects both what we do in Brownsfield renovation and in new buildings or taking old buildings and doing something with them like at Hollar Mill. He commented the real answer was you never stop learning about this stuff, there is too much and so you have got to keep learning the whole time about every one of the areas.

Alderman Lail appreciated Mr. Moone coming to the City Council meetings. He had noticed Mr. Moone to be someone that could disagree without being disagreeable. That was appreciated. He asked how he would strive to reach consensus on Council in the event there is some disagreement.

Mr. Moone commented like a number of the other candidates he is first and foremost a people person. He had been in business as a young man, a life insurance agent. He had been a teacher most of his life. His largest career obviously was being a pastor. All of those have factors that are relational. Building consensus with people was what he enjoys doing. He also thought and personally believed that he works better with people on the inside of something than just staying outside and throwing potshots at something. He thought Council got a lot of that. He thought that it was important to be involved. He had learned so much. He had heard, when he started serving on the Bond Commission, he had heard prior to that from a number of people in the community, you can go there, (this was before he was a member of it), but nobody is going to listen to you on there. He found exactly the opposite in Hickory. He found that people on the Bond Commission, on the first set of people, he was able to sit at the table, work with the planning, offer his ideas into that. When the vote came he had to step back. But it lead him to know where we were and where we were going. He told Charles, with Freese and Nichols, which honoring process is really important and that is what is important here. Council has experience, and knowledge, anybody coming on Council new needs to gain that knowledge that they can get from each Councilmember and their perspectives. It is the only way we can lead a City forward.

Mayor Guess commented relationships are extremely important and particularly the relationships that we have with existing businesses and future businesses. He was interested in hearing Mr. Moone's perspective on how we grow future businesses in Hickory.

Mr. Moone thought Mr. Griffith was right about 90 to 100 percent of what he had said. He thought we were better off trying to work the entrepreneurship element of it in building your own rather than seeking big companies. He had always been afraid and worried about communities of our size can get one maybe two, every now and then, big companies, corporation, international companies to come into a community. But when something happens worldwide you don't know whether they are going to close down yours or not. He used Kmart as an example, but that was a smaller picture. He commented the Corning example was a part of that as well. What do we do? He thought we have to begin building from the inside out. That was the first thing. Secondly he had a personal interest. His daughter and her husband are entrepreneurs here with a business and with three young children their business must succeed here. There is no place, and he had lived in a number of places around, there is no place quite like Hickory for a positive business environment. Not really. He thought that got back to what Charlotte Williams' said about being our worst best secret. That kind of thing. We have got to share constantly.

Alderman Seaver commented there was no question that Mr. Moone loved Hickory, and he was from Hickory now.

Mr. Moone advised 30 years, 22 in the Ward.

Alderman Seaver mentioned his friend Frank Willis once had said he wasn't from Hickory but he got here as fast as could. He asked Mr. Moone when he was speaking with someone how he would sell Hickory to them. This is where I am from and why you need to move here.

Mr. Moone advised there were three things, four specific areas. He preached the Christian gospel for 30 years. He would happily preach the good news about Hickory far and wide. The industriousness of our people, our strong religious culture and family friendly lifestyle, our quality of public and private schools. He was able to be a part of both of those as an educator. Innovative higher education institutions, our effective community policing, and low crime rate, the quality of our two hospitals, and tax rates that are lower than nearby big cities. Our wonderful parks and recreational facilities, our amazing geographical location and accessibility. An arts community that is second to none. You can't find an arts community like that is here and the leadership and so much more making that "Life. Well Crafted." really a true calling card for us. We should be saying "Life. Well Crafted." to people. He has said "Politics. Well Crafted." to Council. He would preach it.

Alderman Williams asked Mr. Moone if he had ideas on local government improvement that he felt had not been considered or discussed publicly.

Mr. Moone commented when he thought about that question the first thing that came to his mind was because Council had ask the question that hasn't been discussed much publicly. He didn't think there was anything that hadn't been discussed in some way, either in a campaign or in some other thing that he had seen yet. One of the things that hadn't been discussed or seen Council discuss publicly was term limits for Councilmembers. He wasn't saying he would advocate there at this point, he was simply saying he didn't know that had been discussed, maybe it has in other context than this. But publicly he didn't see that. He commented the fact we must be committed as a Council and as a City to leave no quadrant left behind as we pursue economic development opportunities. We have to have that balanced City that we once got our award for being. That was very important to him. He had been coming here so long now and preparing for today even in some ways, but he had been coming so long he really thought that there was very little that they hadn't talked about. We just need to just get down to where we go with some of those things. What are our goals? He looked through the Action Plan. He went on the website and took the Action Plan down. One of the things he noticed about that Action Plan was it had great goals, and maybe they were somewhere else, but it did not have measureable

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objectives. So that we know as citizens, as Councilmembers, leaders, where they are in each part of that Action Plan in terms of its success and achievement. He thought that was really important. He was always taught to have measurable objectives. You have got to know where the end point is and what you are after to get. You might not get there but you won't make progress towards it.

Alderman Zagaroli was delighted that he lives in Hickory now after listening to Mr. Moone. He is not going to leave now with all of the stuff that is going on. He asked the three most pressing concerns facing the City of Hickory.

Mr. Moone advised to do everything possible to insure that the bond projects are brought to completion on time and within budget. Not just completed, on time and within budget. That is a pressing issue. The people are waiting, In regard to that, he stated when we put that shovel in the ground, prayerfully and hopefully, in July for the spine of the City Walk that we will not just have Mayor Guess and a couple of Councilmembers out there, we will make that a celebration moment, really big. We have heard it from a number of these candidates about how we have got to communicate constantly the social media, the various ways. We try so hard, Dana Kaminske and Staff had tried so hard, and worked so hard, he saw that at Neighborhood College too. You can't ever communicate too much it seemed to him. He referenced his prior answer where he would preach the good news of Hickory. The third thing no quadrant left behind. He advised his fourth answer was to expand constituent involvement by holding a neighborhood listening session in Ward 2 and also attending other neighborhood associations. Nobody in Hickory should ever feel like they can't be heard, ever.

Alderman Guess asked Mr. Moone for his closing statements.

Mr. Moone commented a lot of people up here have said listening is crucial and Council knows that. They listen a lot. He thought of three things: 1) the neighborhood listening events, monthly. He thought Council should have those monthly in Ward 2. They don't have that in Ward 2 and they need to develop it. 2) Once a week call Ward 2 voters. At least once a week get on the phone and call 5 -10 people see if they have anything to say. Tell them who you are. He advised he was like former Mayor Rudy Wright in this, his phone number is out there for everybody; it always has been and always will be. He didn't care and he gets calls constantly because of it. Which drive his wife crazy but not him. Ask if they have any concerns or questions about City services, City issues or anything that is on their minds. Let them have his contact information. 3) Stop by Ward 2 businesses and talk to those owners let them know that you care as a City Councilmember that you are there for them. What is going on right now with them? What do they need? 4) Take a walk in our neighborhoods. To go out every so often, not every day, because most Councilmembers probably wouldn't do that and get it done, but take a walk in the various neighborhoods of your Ward. Meet people. There is a Congresswoman somewhere in Illinois who goes to the supermarket every Saturday and she basically walks the isles of the supermarket and engages people about what their concerns are and what their lives are like right now. That is a wonderful idea. He thought women could probably do that better than men particularly in the present atmosphere we have right now. It is how you engage people and constantly work to engage them is what makes people care. He thanked Council for the opportunity.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the next name, Lou Wetmore.

Mr. Lou Wetmore advised in 1968 his company moved him to Charlotte to be a box salesman. At that point he thought a salesman wore a plaid coat and carried around a vacuum cleaner. Many people asked him later if it was hard to learn to sell boxes. He replied particularly empty ones. The truth was he had dragged his wife from Memphis, 500 miles away, from her parents and he had a 2 ½ year old and a four month old baby. He advised that paralyzing fear will get you out of the bed in the morning. Fortunately for him in 1973 the company moved him to Hickory. They bought a little house near the Hampton Heights Golf Course. His oldest son was getting ready to start the first grade and attended St. Stephens Elementary. They loved the teacher, the school, the neighborhood, and their church. They were almost stunned at what a great place Hickory was. Over the years he raised two families here. He had ran several businesses out of Hickory over Georgia, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. In 2008 he sold his business. Everybody thought at that point, because of his advanced age, they thought he was going to retire. His wife likes to tell people she loves his retirement as long as he leaves the house by 8:30 a.m. and doesn't get home until 6:00 p.m. During that whole period he developed a profound sense of debt. Of debt to the Mayor and the Mayors that came before Hank Guess, to the City Councilmen and the ones that came before them, and to the professional staff of Hickory and the ones that had been here for over 40 years. As it stands right now he is in a profession where he has ample free time so that it can pursue other interest. His other interest at this point is to get into a position to start paying back some of the debt that he feels he owes to Hickory. He welcomed City Council's questions.

Alderman Lail commented they had talked a little bit with one of the applicants about decision making processes and sometimes that tension between who you are representing, running against maybe what is in the best interest of the organization with which you represent. He asked how Mr. Wetmore how he might reconcile such tension.

Mr. Wetmore advised obviously it was a situation that had to be examined in every individual circumstance. One of the very first decisions that they had to make when he joined the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), was whether or not to approve the contract for the toll lanes. If you want to talk about a conflict between constituents and what you think is best that was a classic one because he knew there was a lot of people up and down I77 who didn't like the idea, but in listening to the proposals as they were explained he became convinced that it

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was the best thing overall for everybody in the State. It was not an easy decision to make. He felt even though he knew a lot of constituents didn't like it was still the best decision. At a City level one would simply have to examine all of the factors as well as one could, recognizing that a lot of times a constituent will want you to go one way or the other and they don't really know the whole story. Many times when he was on the DOT he had that situation and got a phone call and sometimes when he could explain to them they would understand what was going on, other times he was not successful. That is just the way that is.

Mayor Guess commented that Mr. Wetmore had an extensive background in business. He wanted to know what Mr. Wetmore thought Council was doing right and what he thought they needed to improve on to attract businesses in Hickory.

Mr. Wetmore advised one thing that occurs to him, the City of Hickory maybe we can say there are some issues that need to be addressed, there are a lot of good things that are going on in this City. He thought we needed to build on those and try to move forward with that. Council may have recalled when he was running for Mayor one of the things he thought Council needed to do was reach out to companies and try to get them to come here. He thought that was still something that needed to be done, and could be done. As far as business leaders are concerned he knew quite a few of them in this City and he thought the thing to do would be seek them out and solicit their ideas about what their needs and wants are and try to respond to that.

Alderman Seaver asked what Mr. Wetmore thought were some of the top selling points of Hickory if he was talking to somebody about moving to Hickory.

Mr. Wetmore commented you could talk about the obvious things, the climate which is wonderful but it is throughout the whole State. The proximity to the coast and to the mountains. He would talk a lot about the cost of living, and the cultural arts which Mr. Moone had mentioned. We have the Hickory Museum of Art, the SALT Block, the orchestra, and the Choral Society. We have a cultural City here that is completely unusual for a town our size. He would talk that up not to mention just the general friendliness of the people and the way that Hickory people live.

Alderman Williams addressed Mr. Wetmore, in your Ward, staying informed on important issues amongst your constituents, what his ideas were on how to go about keeping himself involved, informed and engaged with his people in his Ward.

Mr. Wetmore mentioned that some of the other people had mentioned, and he would certainly pass out his cellphone number. His experience in being on the Board of Transportation was when people have a specific issue that they wished to be addressed they are usually not reticent to pick up the phone and call you or write you a letter and tell you what they are thinking about. He thought in doing that the most important thing that he learned was to respond to those and even if you can't do what they want you do to you need to tell them that. He thought the most important thing was to respond to those inquiries. Not to mention moving around in the neighborhood and attending homeowner's association meetings and things of that nature to be visible.

Alderman Zagaroli asked what some of the most pressing concerns that Hickory has at this point that he could address.

Mr. Wetmore agreed with some of the people who had mentioned it, and that was the bond issue for the City Walk and the Riverwalk needs to be pushed forward as fast as we can reasonably and accurately do it. He thought that could make a big difference to our City and how attractive we are to others. He thought the next biggest problem facing Hickory, which was not really on the main screen right now, was we are getting ready to start widening 321. He had had enough experience in widenings to tell them that the businesses and people that use that highway are going to suffer severe disruption. That is just the way it is. He thought with his experience on the Board, he would like to have the opportunity to try to minimize those disruptions. He thought with his contacts he could probably do that. He thought they also needed to focus on restoring commercial air service to the airport. The City still has their FA certificate and it can be done. He admitted that getting regular service for example to Charlotte and to Atlanta is probably a longshot but there are low cost carriers that perhaps would have three to four flights a week to vacation spots like Orlando, and that would be a good beginning. He had conversations with Terry Clark about what could be done to move that along and it would be a really good endeavor as far as he is concerned.

Alderwoman Patton asked what the topics were that he felt he would have to educate himself on if he was chosen specific to government.

Mr. Wetmore commented that question was in the paper and his first response was all of the above. He thought since his background was finance, he had spent some time online and looked at the budget, he wanted to dig into that more because that is what he does. At the same time without even mentioning some of the things that were in the letter, he had conversations about the ten year plan that Mr. Wood has for the infrastructure and he talked with Terry Clark about the airport movement. He had also had meetings with Chief Whisnant and Chief Hollar about how the Fire Department and Police Department works to try and educate himself on how those departments work. He knew that there was a lot of things that an outsider does not know, but the only thing you can do is get in and start working at it.

Mayor Guess advised Mr. Wetmore he would have a conclusion as well.

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Mr. Wetmore reiterated he thought the biggest issue facing Hickory right now was the prosecution of the bond issue. He thought that was going forward as it should and that it should continue. He clarified one of the things that he said was he thought the plan should remain intact as it was presented to the voters. He realized, of course, that in big projects like this sometimes changes are necessary. He hoped that the changes were at a minimum and were defensible so that the voters don't feel that perhaps they have been betrayed. He thought that was a danger that had to be acknowledged. At the same time he would look forward to working with the DOT on 321. He encouraged Council and DOT to get the powerlines buried and to add fiber optic cables. It is a perfect time to do it and at the same time he would love to work with Mr. Clark on getting air service restored to Hickory. He thanked Council for allowing him to give them his views.

City Clerk Debbie Miller drew the final name, Bonita Ferretti.

Ms. Bonita Ferretti thanked City Council and the audience members and the public who were present, especially those from Ward 2. She commented this is the democratic process in action. She thanked Council for creating this process. She had several people over the last week or so say they were so glad that Council was doing that this way. She thought people wanted to see it as a transparent process and a fair process. In her opinion it had been, and she assumed all of the other candidates agreed with her. She advised she had lived in Hickory nearly 25 years now. Her dad was a high school English teacher but his hobby was politics and it rubbed off on her. By the time she was about 10 or so she understood that a Supreme Court Justice has just as much impact on a society as a President, because he made sure she understood that. He liked to quiz Ms. Ferretti and her sisters on things like name the amendments to the Constitution or branches of government, things like that. She realized that her sisters always found a way to slink out the door and get away because they didn't think that was fun. She thought that was pretty fascinating. She comes by her interest in politics very naturally. She had been following the progress that the City has made with interest for a long time. She felt that Hickory was gaining momentum toward the next evolution. She called it the next best Hickory. She often hears people talk and they would say things like, "Oh, we have got to get back to what Hickory used to be", or "If we could only recreate what used to be". She would rather have a conversation about what we are going to be next. The horizon is far more interesting than what is in the rearview mirror. She advised we do have to honor our past and she wasn't suggesting that we shouldn't do that. For her that means building a community where businesses can thrive and citizens feel a strong sense of identity. Where everyone from young families to retirees can enjoy all that our City has to offer and where they can enjoy a high quality of life. It takes imagination to build this because when you want to build something that is not there you have to imagine it. That is the hard part. It takes imagination, creative problem solving, a little bit of faith in what you are planning to do and a whole lot of hard work to make it happen. Our challenges did not show up overnight and they are not going to be solved overnight either. A few of the challenges include continuing to attract and retain business, dealing with aging infrastructure, addressing the growing homeless population and finding solutions to the increased opioid addiction, just to name a few. Her community involvement record was wide and varied. She had served as a leader in the lots of different types of groups, large and small, all over the City. Her local involvement included she was currently the immediate past President of the United Arts Council. During her presidency year they undertook a very large project, the economic impact study. In January the results of that were presented to City Council. She also served as President of the Hickory Community Theatre the year they undertook the decision to undergo a \$1.2 million dollar renovation. Their capital campaign. That was a very ambitious project for an organization of that size. She also serves as chair of a scholarship committee for the Service League of Hickory which manages ten, four year scholarships to local students. She also serves as co-chair of their investment group which manages all of the endowment funds for that scholarship. In professional settings she had also worked in a variety of businesses. After she received her bachelor's degree she went to work as a manager in a French restaurant. There she learned a lot of things that she has continued to use to this day including time management, employee development, customer service and more importantly communication especially its role in conflict management. She commented nobody calls the manager of the restaurant over to the table when everything is going well. She knew that good communication and sharing information is often the key to deal with something even when they don't like the answer. It is the same skill that would also be useful as a City Councilmember. An example of this would be to communicate. She had heard several people say it tonight, the Bond Commission and where they are. You can go online and read the minutes of their meetings and you can see that they are at 60 percent of design. That is great. She wanted to know if that was on time. Did they think they would be there now? Or are they ahead of schedule? Are they behind schedule? She thought they could create a simple timeline that could be printed on the City Snippets, which comes in the water bill, a line towards the bottom that shows where they think they are going to be and where they are. That would solve a lot of the questions because people don't know. They know they voted for this thing and then it didn't happen. Is it happening in the dark somewhere or is it happening but you have got to go find the information. She thought the City people do a great job of trying to get it out there. She would like to see not only what they are doing but is that meeting expectation. That was her suggestion.

Mayor Guess joked asking Ms. Ferretti if she could name the amendments to the Constitution. He asked her what her views were on how we grow and maintain businesses in Hickory, particularly Ward 2.

Ms. Ferretti advised most of her involvement had been with nonprofits, but those were called nonprofit businesses. They are still businesses. They operate a little differently, they have a different structure, but they still have to bring in money, balance budgets and make sure they meet their bottom line, try to grow if they can. In her opinion dealing with things like Hickory Community Theatre and making sure they had a balance budget and they had all of the things

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they needed was the same as the business next door that might be a for-profit business. She thought there were a lot of people who were highly educated on this subject. She advised that was not her strong subject matter but she would look to them to guide the City. She thought City Council was a conduit. She didn't think the answers to all of our problems are sitting right here. She thought Council's job was to go find the people that will give us good answers or give us good insights and then make good decisions with that. Most all of her adult life she had spent in group decision, on boards, and she thought that was a model that she was incredibly comfortable with. She was intimately knowledgeable on how that works because she had done almost nothing but consensus decision making.

Alderman Seaver commented he was impressed with the folks here tonight. He asked her to explain why she was the best candidate for Council person for Ward 2.

Ms. Ferretti thought that being a City Council person at the end of the day comes down to relationships. Council has relationships with each other to get decisions made and build consensus. They have relationships with the community, the staff, outside groups the people that live outside of Hickory, the County, the State and relationship decision making is about all she has done for the last 30 years on every group that she has been on. Her ability to bring different kinds of people together, she can talk to just about anybody. She will engage with anybody. That would serve her well. City Councilmembers don't have to have all the ideas. They have to be a conduit for the ideas to come and go and the people to be able to talk to them. She thought that citizens needed to know how to contact them and do we reply. Things like that are really important for a City Councilmember. She thought that her years in the community and connections in the community put her in a place where she talks to a lot of people. She is connected with a lot of people on a daily basis and she thought that would serve her well and hopefully City Council well.

Alderman Williams asked if she had ideas on local government improvements that she felt hadn't been considered or that she had heard publicly.

Ms. Ferretti commented the good news is we are talking about everything and she thought that was fabulous. She didn't know if this was a new thing but it seems to her that it has grown and maybe it has something to do with some of the big changes we have seen in Washington and people are just talking about politics more. She wasn't sure where it derived from. She had talked to people about local government politics where she hadn't ever done that before. Not in this process, in the last several years. The good news is people are talking. There is not much that hasn't been talked about. She agreed with that. She said that no one had really mentioned this. She thought there was something that we don't want to talk about much, and that was there is some division in our community and that division can be based on a lot of different things. It can be economic division, education division, age division, we have millennials and everybody else, race, income levels, the area of town you live in. She thought there was some divisions that are uncomfortable to talk about. Other cities deal with these divisions just like we do. She thought we need to look and see what other people have done and do everything in our power to make every citizen feel like an "owner", think of themselves as "owners" of Hickory instead of just citizens. Because if you look at the Ward chart, if you pull it up, the very top the boss are the citizens of Hickory and below that is City Council and Mayor and then it moves down to Mr. Wood and his staff. The citizens of Hickory are the owners of Hickory. She wasn't sure that they feel that way right now and she would love to see that grow.

Alderman Zagaroli asked how we keep millennials in town. How do we get them and keep them?

Ms. Ferretti commented a lot of smart people are working on that problem. We need to let millennials know we are here and how do millennials find anything. On a computer. They go looking and they google. There is a whole set of people who will move somewhere else and live somewhere else but they need to know that you are here. Having a strong presence, marketing yourself as a millennial. What do millennials want? We know what that is. They want a lifestyle. She summed that up as lifestyle. She thought we all know what that means. The bond projects will build that lifestyle. We will have the outdoor areas for the River Walk, the City Walk, things like that that millennials will be attracted to. She predicted that once the City Walk is built and you go down there just about any given day or time, you are going to see as many people with white hair walking out there as you are millennials. We pretend like millennials are the only ones who want some of this cool stuff, and she thought there was a whole other segment of the population that is going to enjoy it as much. She thought we already had a lot of the elements that a millennial wants. We have low cost of living. You can buy a house here. You can buy a house with a yard for your dog and live here pretty reasonably. We have a great climate. If you didn't grow up in the South, you might be from Boston, we have a great climate compared to theirs. She grew up in the north so she could say that. She wasn't knocking snow, it is fun, it is great, but she doesn't play in it anymore. We have the natural resources that Mr. Moone talked about, the lake, the mountains, and things like that are a draw. She thought we had a great little potential for businesses for those startups. She advised she had two millennial children and they talk about startups a lot. They want to work for a startup. What they mean is they want to work for a small company and be in on the ground floor. Why aren't we a resource for a young person who wants to build a startup? A mentoring program. A place where you can come and there is a mentoring program because we have all of this business knowledge. There are lots and lots of people in this town who have business knowledge and are probably willing to share it if it benefits Hickory overall. Place ourselves as a mentoring center for startups might be part of the solution.

Alderwoman Patton asked what her view was of the role of local government.

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Ms. Ferretti reiterated that she had used the word relationship earlier. She is a relationship person, she understands them and she likes them. She thought the role of local government plain and simple was the relationship with the people. It should be a relationship that is intimate and personal. These are your people. It is not a relationship that is we will put up a website and if you have a question go to the website and get your answer. The role of government is to be the face of government for the people and that means you also have to be the ear when they want to tell you what they hear and that should be exactly what you are.

Alderman Lail commented that is about building consensus in group setting. She had clearly articulated her experience with that.

Ms. Ferretti replied she had pretty much did nothing but, that was the short answer. It is a formula she is very comfortable. She understands that sometimes you have to compromise. Nobody likes that word but it is a quite valuable tool.

Mayor Guess advised Ms. Ferretti she could give Council her conclusion.

Ms. Ferretti felt there was a foundation that had been laid here in Hickory and she felt it was time to continue to build on that foundation and take the next steps toward inventing our own future while continuing to honor our past. We have great challenges but we have great people to help address them. She grew up in a very small town, but she had also lived in large metropolitan cities. She finds Hickory to be the perfect place to connect with fellow citizens. She always says Hickory is the size town where you always run into somebody you know and there is always somebody new to meet. She has a deep love for this City and the people that call it their home. She considers it a blessing in her life that she and her husband found such a nurturing place to raise their family when they were young. She looks forward to retiring here. Hickory was not her birth home but it is something stronger, it is her chosen home. She would be honored if she were to be chosen to help lead the City to help create its next best self. She thanked Council.

Mayor Guess commented if he could only have one word to describe the applicants tonight it would be wow. He was extremely impressed with the quality of citizenry that we have that have applied for the one vacant seat for Ward 2. He believed that any of the eight applicants could fill this seat and it is going to be a tremendously difficult decision for Council to pick only one person to be able to sit in this seat. They have quite the task before them. He asked for any comments or discussion from Council.

Alderwoman Patton thanked everyone for being present. The public showed a real interest in and a love of the City, and the applicants for their time and their commitment. They appreciated it.

Alderman Lail echoed Mayor Guess' comments. Having familiarity with the applicants he knew that it would be tough. Then he got their materials submitted in writing, and he thought this is really going to be hard. Now we come to this part of the process and it is going to be an extremely difficult decision. He certainly hopes, irrespective of who is chosen, that if they are not then they would consider staying involved in this City in some form or fashion. He had heard some great ideas tonight, just really great ideas. And the enthusiasm that they all showed had been very much appreciated and they have a tough job in front of them to select.

Alderman Zagaroli thanked all the applicants. He advised he took notes on some of these great ideas that Council could certainly use. He thanked them again. We are really very blessed to have all of these people interested in this seat and the quality of people to select from.

Alderman Williams echoed the same. Each of the candidates were very impressive and very well spoken, and yes it is going to be a very tough decision.

Alderman Seaver thought it was quite an educational moment for him too. If he was ranking the scoring here, he has an eight way tie for first right now. It is going to be very difficult.

Mayor Guess commented that somebody suggested that they put all of the names back in the box and just pull one out. He asked if Council still wanted to do that.

Alderman Lail asked Mayor Guess if he found it appropriate, he requested a round of applause for the applicants.

A round of applause was given to the applicants.

Mayor Guess asked for any further comments from Council or staff. There was none.

V. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk