

A Special Meeting of the Hickory City Council was held in Hickory, North Carolina on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at the Catawba Valley Community College, in the Workforce Solutions Complex, located at 1980 Startown Road.

On Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at approximately 12:00 p.m. a Special Council Workshop was convened.

The following members were present: Mayor Hank Guess, Alderman Tony Wood, Alderwoman Charlotte Williams, Alderman Danny Seaver, Alderman David Williams, and Alderwoman Jill Patton. Absent: Alderman David Zagaroli. A quorum was present.

Others present were: City Manager Warren Wood, Assistant City Manager Rick Beasley, Deputy City Manager Rodney Miller, Deputy City Attorney Arnita Dula, Library Director Sarah Greene, Police Chief Thurman Whisnant, Communications Specialist Sarah Killian, City Attorney John Crone, Governmental Affairs Analyst Sarah Prencipe, Community Development Manager Karen Dickerson, Human Resources Director Claudia Main, Executive Assistant to the City Manager Deisy Zavala, and City Clerk Debbie D. Miller

I. Call to Order

Mayor Guess welcomed everyone to the meeting. He recognized Hickory City Council members introducing: Alderwoman Patton, Alderman Williams, Alderman Seaver, Alderwoman Williams, and Alderman Wood. He also recognized City Attorney John Crone, City Manager Warren Wood, and Assistant City Manager Rick Beasley. Several other staff members were in attendance and he thanked them for their assistance with setting up the meeting. He thanked Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) President Dr. Garrett Hinshaw for allowing the City to use the facility for the meeting and for the opportunity to see what CVCC has to offer. He appreciated the partnership/relationship that the City has with CVCC. He mentioned that Western Piedmont Council of Governments was instrumental in gathering the information needed to conduct the workshop and he thanked them as well. He requested that anyone speaking to do so at a microphone as the meeting was being filmed to be posted on the website and shared with others who might like to see it but were unable to attend. He recognized the President of the NAACP, Mr. Sam Hunt and advised that other NAACP members were present, as well as other special guests. He mentioned this was the first workshop and there would be others. He advised it was a public meeting and he called the meeting to order.

II. Introduction and Recap of the Racial Equity Report Findings – City Manager Warren Wood

City Manager Warren Wood thanked everyone for coming and for the good turnout. He also thanked Dr. Garrett Hinshaw. He noted there was nothing like the CVCC complex in the State of North Carolina. The facility had created a lot of success in the economic development efforts. He commented the best way to avoid poverty and ensure success in someone's life was to prepare themselves for the opportunity of a good paying job. There were a lot of services and programs in the community that could help people to do that and educate people of how to go about doing that. He recapped the Racial Disparities Report that was presented a few weeks ago. The report was 80 pages long and he advised he was presenting a few slides of a summary. He advised when the census data comes back, they would be able to compare the most current census numbers to the previous census numbers and do another iteration of the report when that data becomes available.

City Manager Warren Wood presented a PowerPoint. He discussed a few major takeaways. White and African-American populations were aging the fastest. Hispanic and Asian populations were growing the fastest. There was a large household income gap between African-Americans/Hispanics and Whites/Asian-Americans. There was also a large educational achievement gap between African-American and all other groups in the community. There was a large educational attainment gap between the African-Americans/Hispanics and Whites/Asian Americans. Our economy was transitioning to one that will require more advanced skill sets as a result and will offer more pay to those that are prepared. It was vital that the residents are prepared for and connected to the employment opportunities that exist today and in the future both locally and nationally.

City Manager Warren Wood discussed economic opportunity and opportunity to improve on the disparities. Hickory and Catawba County are focused on economic development and job growth. He referred to the partnership with Catawba County of the Trivium Corporate Center. Trivium Corporate Center was an advanced business park where hundreds of jobs had been announced, and tens of millions of dollars in tax base. The CVCC facility had a lot to do with it. Those were the types of jobs they were bringing to the community. In our community there was opportunity. If we were facing disparity and weren't growing this would be a monumental task. The good news was we are growing. We are getting a lot of high paying jobs which require high skill sets, so there was opportunity in the community. We need to add 500 people a year to the workforce in Catawba County just to maintain status quo. That was how quickly that White and African-American populations were aging. That 500 did not include finding people to fill these jobs that were being announced. Catawba County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) had done a great job landing over 2,000 new jobs in Catawba County over the past few years. All of these

jobs pay above the Catawba County average wage which was \$44,000. The City does not incentives jobs that don't pay at least the County's average wage. They are going to continue to raise the bar in terms of pay in Catawba County. Additionally, there are currently over 8,000 vacant jobs in the metro area. Before COVID there were 3,400 vacant jobs. In COVID there are 8,000 plus or minus jobs that are currently vacant. Some of what had happened was there were moms and dads that can't go to work because their child was out of school. There were all kinds of different situations. He advised there was opportunity in the community.

City Manager Warren Wood discussed unique community assets and investments to prepare residents for the economy of the future. He advised that Hickory has a lot of unique assets a lot of communities don't have. Some of those included Hickory citizens control their own school system, Hickory Public Schools. Around the State most of the systems are countywide. There was just a handful of systems like this one. We have a real small manageable school system. The City of Hickory was one of eight cities in North Carolina that operates its own library system. They are normally county ran. We have the main library and Ridgeview Branch. There are two other county libraries in addition to that. The SALT Block was also a unique asset to the City. CVCC was located in Hickory and was one of the best community colleges in the United States. The Small Business Center was located at CVCC and its services were free. K-64 provided Chromebooks to every student and also internet service if needed to all students. Western Piedmont Council of Governments NC Works has a Career Center. He mentioned the Catawba County Partnership for Children. The City of Hickory partners with them to make sure that every child, 0 - 5 years old, got a book every month delivered to their house. That was part of the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. That was very unique for children in Hickory. Kim Holden talked about the importance of the first 2,000 days in a child's life. He noted they were excited about were the City was going with the trail system and development of that was starting to popup. The system would contain conduit for nearly 10 miles of broadband fiber. There were also options at Lenoir-Rhyne University. A lot of unique assets in the City of Hickory.

City Manager Warren Wood discussed workforce preparedness and economic advancement. He mentioned the entities in the community who were working in those areas: City of Hickory does infrastructure and economic development which was a main focus for them. The City also partners with Catawba County. Catawba County does school funding as well as economic development as well as a lot of other things. Hickory Public Schools and Catawba County Public Schools both do education. We need an educated workforce. K-64's mission was developing a "Future Ready Workforce" and lifetime learning. CVCC was workforce development and small business assistance. Western Piedmont Council of Government's was workforce development and job placement. Catawba County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) obviously was economic development.

City Manager Warren Wood advised in today's meeting they would discuss the entities in the community that work on workforce development, K-64, CVCC/Workforce Solutions Complex and WPCOG/Career Centers. They need to understand their role and mission in the community and determine what work was currently being done to connect disadvantaged communities to employment opportunities. What challenges do they have? Help individuals overcome employment obstacles. Identify the gaps that exist in serving Hickory residents and preparing them for success. That would be the focus of today's meeting.

III. K64 – Presentation by CVCC President, Dr. Garrett Hinshaw

CVCC President, Dr. Garrett Hinshaw welcomed everyone to their Catawba Valley Community College. He was honored to discuss with them the issues the community was facing. He advised it all started with critical conversations. Connecting the dots and building relationships. We need to never stop trying to improve those types of conversations throughout the community. He would discuss the existing opportunities and how they connect the dots to ensure that every citizen in Catawba County has equal access to those opportunities. How do they ensure that each person has the opportunity for success and a quality of life that we all expect for our young people? He thanked the Mayor, City Council, and City of Hickory staff for providing opportunities for people to express the experiences that are happening to that person. This was an important piece to what they do.

Dr. Hinshaw presented a PowerPoint. He advised CVCC's mission was to empower the courageous to become champions, the bold to become life-long learners and tomorrow's leaders for our community. Simple as it gets. They want to give everybody a chance and give everybody that hope that they can be successful here in this area. To do that, a lot of times, they have to look in the mirror. They have to think about all of the different agencies that are providing support in this area. Sometimes we get too busy in our own stuff and we don't look outside of our box. We don't reach out to those other agencies which could be an important part of reaching major goals. In 2008-2010 we went through a terrible recession and lost a ton of jobs in this area. People didn't know what to do. The College was overrunning with individuals looking for an opportunity for themselves, retool or change careers. That was a real challenge because at the time information came out, from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments, showing the population projections for Catawba County long term. They were frightening. We were going to lose a lot of young people. We were going to let opportunity that existed right here move out of

this area if they didn't do something more. Catawba County Commissioners approached him, and he began to work with Mr. Mark Story. They began to think about what had to change if they were going to change the projectory of the population. It was everything that had to change. They put together a program that was driving change through the public education systems, from kindergarten all the way through community college, and Lenoir-Rhyne University. "K" was for kindergarten and 64 represented what we hope we can do someday and that was retire. It talks about creating those on and off ramps that were necessary for the community and the citizens to be successful. No longer can they say what they did five years ago was still relevant today. They have to continue to look for opportunities to build relationships that were necessary. They presented that proposal to the Catawba County Commissioners. They thought it was risky, but it was bold, and that was what they had asked them to bring to the Commissioners. The Commissioners made a funding commitment for this program long term. With that came public and private partnerships that also provided funding. They created the change that was necessary and what their focus would be. It was about connecting the workforce, our young people, our future workforce. The real opportunities that exist was buried, so if they could get them started early in thinking about what the next step takes. Thinking about public education, for too long they went through the process that focused on the top 20 - 30 percent. Those that were going to go straight to the university and were going to be successful. What about that 70 percent? What about those kids? They needed to create a program that was going to answer that question on what tomorrow looked like for them. They have a longways to go, but they have absolutely started down this pathway in connecting partnerships and building relationships that were necessary. When you think about partnerships you have to have talent, training, and education. You've got an employer. How do they make those two to meet seamlessly? It was through partnerships with NC Works Western Piedmont Council of Governments. Municipalities, County Commissioners, all the employers in the area. Most importantly it was about each and every child that moves into that system and how they would progress and what they critically need to be successful in the community.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed K-64's six guiding priorities. The first was 1-to-World Technology. Connecting every student with the technology he or she needs to optimize learning inside and outside the classroom. Every single student in the three public school systems has technology now because of K-64. It was Mark Story's big dream. That they would address the challenges for rural areas with no internet connection. That they could provide each and every student the opportunity to show up for school with their work done because they had what they needed at home to do what they needed to do. They had received a lot of feedback on that. He shared a story about a child named Jim who would show up every day just to cause problems in the school system. After he got his Chromebook and he got access to the internet Jim started showing up ready for class. He started showing up because he was equal to everybody else there. He wasn't embarrassed anymore about not having all the resources that he needed for school. That was the change they had to create at a very early stage. They also focused on character and soft skills development. In the social economy of today, a lot of these kids come to school and it may be the only meal that they get that day. They may be thinking about will my power be on when I go home. They may be thinking will mom and dad even be there. Will mom be there by herself? What is going to be going on in my household? How can they expect kids to come into the learning facility and focus and engage and learn, when they know when they leave that school setting the challenges that they face at their house? Families used to gather around dinner tables and have conversations and talk about values, and good behavior and those sorts of things. That doesn't happen often enough anymore. That was why they emphasis the character development and soft skills. Learning how to work together, communicate, how to be a productive citizen and the expectations that you need to meet as you move through the continuum.

Dr. Hinshaw advised they also knew if they gave technology to everyone, they better have teachers that knew how to use it. They invested a ton of money in teacher training and every one of the teachers in the 30-school system went through this intensive training learning how to engage in a different world. They focused on work-based learning. People that go through educational processes are just after a piece of paper that was a credential, but they have no idea what that means in the workforce. Their goal was to provide every student the opportunity to make their education relevant through a work-based learning experience. That was not easy to do. They have to have commitments from the employee spectrum across all sectors. They have to assure that those experiences are of value and they're not just sending them in there to empty the trash cans. They were sending them in there to see what their future may look like. They have employer engagement which was one of the most critical pieces that they hadn't paid attention to enough in the educational sector. Employers look at the educational sector and say you are supposed to provide us with this. Educational sector said they were providing it, but they never make those connections. Employer engagement, getting employers connected through partnerships, not partnerships where you sit around a table and talk about the problem, but a partnership where you roll up your sleeves and do something about it. Those are the partnerships they are building through their employer engagement initiative. He discussed career adaptability. It was not like it used to be where you go get a degree or a credential and then you have a career. They have to learn new skills every day. Students need to understand that was an important piece of lifelong learning.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed programs for high school students. When you look at how it connects

high school students to the programs at CVCC they are building a very strong apprenticeship program that gives free tuition, full-time employment to individuals from all three school systems that enter into those agreements with the employers in this area. Many of the young people don't know about these opportunities and don't see that as their future. They have career and technical programs, that result in high paying jobs. Not minimum wage. Quality of life opportunities that exist right here. Their employers tell them every day that they can't find people to work. Why? There was 5,000 people on CVCC's campus during normal times that they could be choosing from. Instead these employers post their positions on Indeed and hope that there are young people connected with them. They need to be sufficient in their notion where they have the ability to build relationships early and they can determine where they are a good fit with a potential future employer.

IV. CVCC and Workforce Solutions Complex – Presentation by CVCC President, Dr. Garrett Hinshaw

CVCC President, Dr. Garrett Hinshaw referred to the complex and discussed the types of programs in the complex, usually in most educational settings they were located in a dirty old shop somewhere. How is that inspiring young people to want to pursue a career in this area? When you walk through CVCC's complex it was state of the art. It was inspirational. That was the whole goal of the facility to say to the 70 percent there is a place for you here. This was the level of value they were placing on their education and their skill credentials. He discussed engineering technology and the engineering programs. He advised they were two plus two guaranteed in the State of North Carolina. You could earn two years towards a four-year degree here and then transfer to any public institution that offered engineering. It saved money for the students and their family and the community, approximately \$30,000. He discussed skilled trades, which included: automotive systems technology, computer integrated machining, HVACR, and welding. It was a challenge to find trades people. If you look at that industry sector and the age of those individuals there was a big gap coming at us, to the point you were not going to be able to afford to pay someone to come fix the plumbing or the HVAC system, because there was going to be so few of them out there. They have got to address those things and really know the pool.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed the 3-D printing program. A lot of things that were created now were printed off of a 3-D printing. There was a huge demand for employment in this market. They have a center at the CVCC complex where students are printing out all kinds of things. If you look at the technology that existed within the facility it was real life. It was bringing the classroom to life. That had been their motto from day one, building relevant spaces that understand what the world work was going to feel like. The center was exactly designed for that purpose. They have companies that were investing in there. Putting their own machines in the complex. He noted that Sarstedt had placed a \$275,000 injection molding machine at the facility, that they had shipped to them from Germany, to train people to come work for them. He mentioned Wanzhi, formerly Technibilt, was one of the largest manufacturers of shopping carts in North America, a lot of people don't even know there here. Those were important facets of what the future holds and what they look at. He discussed electrical systems technology, CNC machining, world class programs to go anywhere and do anything, but they couldn't graduate enough students to fill the workforce. They need more. They need to broaden the pipeline. Talk to these kids and get them engaged and let them see the opportunities that exist. He noted that welding was one of their fastest growing programs. Every manufacturer in the whole world needs welders. Welders are beneficial and were in high demand. When a student completes a certificate credential, they leave there making \$25 an hour right out of the gate and some of them were actually way above six figures if they were very skilled.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed automotive systems. They offer a whole series of bays committed to the automotive industry. They were doing hybrids, electrical cars and would be moving into light diesel. They were making a difference for that connection and that pathway for the future workers. He mentioned the HVAC program was getting ready for an expansion into plumbing. They do residential and commercial HVAC training with all the credentials that were necessary there. He advised that all of their faculty came from the workforce. They were not trained educators necessarily they were experienced and knew what it takes to be successful. He commented they have one of the largest SkillsUSA programs in the whole country. He was very proud of this. He explained that SkillsUSA was where their students prove the quality that goes on in the classroom. They compete nationally against colleges all over the country. If Catawba Valley Community College was its own State, last year, they would have finished second only to the State of Texas with the number of medals that their students won. This was the story that they needed to be telling the young people. It was the story they needed to be telling their employers. The talent was here. They have to think differently about how they fish and how they connect with the young people and how they build these pipelines broader.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed the Valley SIM Hospital, the largest simulated hospital east of the Mississippi River. This facility made you feel like you were in a hospital. Everything was lifelike as it could be. This simulation allows them to do things that they had never had access to do for the healthcare in this area. They go through thousands of simulations that they would never see on a regular day of clinicals at the hospital. He advised they had former students, that were now

employees, who had identified something going on with a patient at the hospital because they had gone through the simulation and were taught to identify the problem. That was the difference it could make and what they were focusing on. He referred to the PowerPoint and displayed pictures from the Valley SIM Hospital. He invited anyone to come and visit the facilities. They were working in real life and understood what it was going to be like when they were employed with their employer. That brings value to the employer that they have a facility like this. They have physicians and practitioners that were coming back on to the campus and training in the Valley SIM Hospital on issues that they were having at the hospital every day.

Dr. Hinshaw advised they also have a developing public services training center that would be important for the future of this area. Once it was completed, they will have fire, EMS, rescue, and law enforcement. Everything that you could ever imagine in terms of training would be available right here in the City of Hickory. That was important for everyone because they are the ones that are going to show up when we are having problems or emergencies, fires, issues, they are the ones that are going to be there. Why wouldn't they want them to be at their very best? Their commitment was they were going to do everything in their power to make sure every officer, fireman, and EMS person was functioning at the highest level that they possible can, because that is who he wants to show up at his house when he is having a problem.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed the state-of-the-art cosmetology center which had just opened up on campus across from Startown Road in the new project. He displayed photos on the PowerPoint and commented there were inspiring spaces again, not just some old shop. They partnered with Plush Kutz, Alderman Williams also a barber in this region. They don't believe that there are any possibilities that are out of their reach if they connect to the right people and the right partners. They have got to make a commitment to that like they never have before to make sure that they are successful.

Dr. Hinshaw mentioned they have the only Office of Multicultural Affairs in the North Carolina Community Colleges Carolina Campus. It was established in 2008. It was a commitment to access and inclusion. They were going to continue to do that and lead in the community in those areas.

Dr. Hinshaw discussed 10 numbers about Catawba Valley Community College. They were ranked number three out of all community colleges in the Nation in 2019. They have 30,000 alumni. They were number one out of 58 community colleges in North Carolina. They were National Champions in the Workplace Skills Model of Excellence. They were 10 National Champions in SkillsUSA National Competition. A 100 percent employment rate in several of their programs. That was success. This couldn't happen without the commitment of the community and all of their partners. They have got to continue this. Identify the assets, the value of the programs and services that were out in the community and layer them together to do something special. He thanked everyone for letting him share a little bit of information and asked for any questions.

City Manager Warren Wood asked Dr. Hinshaw to discuss how they were reaching out to the minority communities to diversify the student population.

Dr. Hinshaw explained that one of the many initiatives that they had made a core priority at the college was built around access equity and inclusiveness. They hadn't done a good job in their history of that. That was why they were putting together some specific actions within their organization for the outreach to the community. They didn't expect everyone to come to the campus, because it was not a comfortable environment for everyone. They had to go out into the community with these programs and opportunities and have these conversations. Then they have got to be reflective on what the community looks like when they think about their faculty and their staff. When an individual does come on their campus, they need to see someone that looks like them. They need to see someone that understands their values, obstacles, and challenges and also see the potential in the opportunity going forward. They have several strategic initiatives to build around how they change their trajectory. Those are being implemented every day. The pandemic had slowed them down some. It was at the heart of what they were committed to at CVCC. He advised he would be glad to have an individual discussion with anyone on that topic. That was important.

Ms. Susan Smith Walker, with Exodus Homes, advised they have 73 residents and they had created a computer lab for higher education and online learning. She asked how much or if any of the skilled training could be done online for an adult who was already working.

Dr. Hinshaw advised currently they were at approximately 75 percent of either hybrid or virtual because of the pandemic. There was approximately 25 percent that still had to be face to face. You couldn't weld virtually and earn credentials. You couldn't do automotive systems or a lot of the healthcare programs. A lot of that required the face to face. They were going to see coming out of the pandemic a big shift towards that hybrid model, where there was a lot of opportunities to engage at home, and then opportunities to come and learn to practice what you have learned at home, physically on campus. He thought that was a big transition they were going to see in education in general as they move forward. There were certain programs for the workforce that

were virtual, and they try to market those. They still hadn't done a great job in telling that story to the community. He invited everyone to come back to the campus and visit anytime and explore the campus, because one of his number one goals that he had, since he had been there for 14 years, was that every individual that walks onto the campus leaves each day and says I had no idea. If they have enough people saying I had no idea, then they are getting the idea. That would make the change they were looking for. He thanked everyone.

V. WPCOG-Western Piedmont Workforce Development – NCWorks Career Center – Presentation by WPCOG Director of Workforce Development Wendy Johnson

WPCOG Director of Workforce Development Wendy Johnson introduced herself. She presented a PowerPoint presentation. She discussed a brief history of the board. There were 23 Workforce Development Boards, in North Carolina, and over 500 nationwide. They were charged through Federal Law, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. Part of that act, as the board, was oversight, coordination, and planning of One-Stop Operations, which for North Carolina was branded as NCWorks Career Centers. She advised she would focus on that today because that was where the real work takes place in terms of the services within the career center. She noted it was housed at Catawba and moved over to Conover Station in Conover. The Career Center offered a lot of career placement and coaching. She mentioned once the student has graduated, they come to the Career Center. They come with a lot of baggage and barriers a lot of times. Their staff spends an enormous amount of time "coaching" them, really helping these people work through their barriers, understand where they are, what was going on and what was next for them. There was a lot around resume preparation as an element, but everything now is on technology and on the internet. Twenty years ago, you could walk into a business and apply on a paper application. Now, even the smallest of employers want a resume or information to be filled out online. Very, very few paper applications. They do a lot of work around that. Along with the job ready preparation, Dr. Hinshaw had mentioned the soft skills element, that was a huge challenge. Not knowing the home life of students, have they learned how to problem solve. A lot of people come in and want a job, but they are not job ready. They are not sure how to dress, they don't have a resume, maybe they don't even have transportation. They also have preparation workshops, most of them were online now. They had seen an enormous uptick in the virtual workshops. Before they were offering these workshops in person and were lucky to have five people show up. Now they are getting 20 plus that logon with them in a live interactive session around how to create a resume, how to dress for the job, how to prepare for an interview. She mentioned that interviews are scary, and they need some help with that. Now when you go into an interview its not just one person, it typically was a panel of three to five people on the interview. That takes a lot of work and finesse to help people through that process.

Ms. Johnson advised they have a reentry coaching job ready program which was for former offenders that they work with through the Department of Commerce. They have certified reentry specialist in all of their career centers. That involved also helping people get housing, just not the job portion. In those workshops they also teach an expungement workshop. They have a lot of young people who have made some mistakes when they were younger, and they want to make sure that they can get those records expunged and help them to go on and be successful. That is what they want to strive to do. They do a lot of work around that with Vanessa James at the Department of Commerce.

Ms. Johnson discussed skill assessments. She shared a story of a girl who thought she wanted to be a medical assistant, but it turned out she was a much better truckdriver. Working through those skill assessments of what you think you want to be versus what you really have the talent and strengths to be can be like a complete 180, sometimes that was very enlightening to see what they are capable of doing. Through their workforce scholarships, that was part of their funding. A lot of their funding goes for that. For eligible participants they could actually provide scholarships to CVCC, other community colleges, and Trans Tech, a lot of people come in and have an interest in truck driving. Along with their scholarships they also have funding for support costs. They know some of the barriers, childcare, transportation, and the tools for the trade. Tools for the auto mechanic program were really expensive so they could actually pay for that as part of their training and support costs through workforce development. They had a preapplication process for these scholarship programs. It could be filled out online and then they can call the person back and have a deeper conversation about what goes on.

Ms. Johnson noted they also provide labor market data including, wages, the industries that were hiring, and occupations that were higher growth. They don't want to steer someone down a career path that they know was decreasing. Or if the automation was changing and they may need to go on a different direction. They also provide this data to employers. She referred to a quarterly newsletter which they produce, the Economic Indicator. She advised it was on their website and they could subscribe. It was great information there for community as a whole.

Ms. Johnson discussed another program at the NCWorks Career Center called NEXTGEN. This was their youth program that focused specifically on 16 to 24-year-olds. Part of that component also involved in school youth. Their staff also does a lot of work at Hickory High School and HCAM (Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School) to help students that are struggling. They have a customized career advantage program and they are also able to provide paid internships

and that work experience. It was critical for them to understand what was out there. As she had mentioned through their coaching it helps explain that it doesn't mean they have to stay there forever. They could go in and try it out and maybe it wasn't what worked. They could help them maneuver that. Where do their skills fit? What is best for them? That was the NEXTGEN Program.

Ms. Johnson mentioned their business recruitment events. They were holding a lot of those at the Career Center in person, but then COVID, and now they have pivoted to online virtual job fairs and also were trying to do business chats. She mentioned you may not really understand what goes on in a business behind those doors. Trying to get the businesses in the spotlight to explain what they do, what their benefits are and what they have to offer. It also helps the young people put a face to a name. Now they have recognized somebody and that may give them a little more confidence to apply or attend a job fair.

Ms. Johnson discussed their Upskill Grant, which was a grant that was offered to businesses to train their own. The amount of people that we need to fill jobs, a lot of employers were starting to look at their own. Senior employees that they feel like needed training to move up to make way for entry level positions. Upskill was a training directive for the incumbent worker through the employer and they work with a customized training program at the Community College. Typically, they were successful in helping the employer get what they need for their incumbent workforce.

Ms. Johnson referred to the report that Mr. Taylor Dellinger had did and advised it was available on the City of Hickory's website. They could access the YouTube video and follow along with the 40-page report. It was excellent. She didn't have a lot to add to that, she felt it wrapped up a lot of everything. She referred to the PowerPoint and displayed a graph. She advised she had pulled the last two year, 2018 and 2019, where there was a full year. Their program year runs from July 1 to June 30. She advised when someone is "enrolled" that was where they had actually interfaced, came to the center, and were working one on one with that career coach, and maybe they were going to school, or they were helping them with a resume, or the job fair. What ncworks.gov allows people to do was actually log online and job search and do a lot of things that doesn't require staff involvement. They want it to require staff involvement. You can do a lot of things now on you on own online. That was where people miss the opportunity to have that coaching. She used as an example going to the gym if you have somebody there supporting you, you're more apt to do it. If you have somebody there supporting, you and coaching you along the way it makes things typically more successful.

Ms. Johnson mentioned the barriers to economic mobility. Lack of transportation was a barrier. The need for childcare assistance was a barrier. The scholarship program might could help them, but if they just want to go to work on a second or third shift job, then they have some time to reevaluate that. Drug abuse, employers need someone that can pass a drug test. That was a huge challenge across the board. Unable to manage oneself, meaning young people can not manage themselves, they don't know how to get to work on time, they didn't have to get to school on time so why did they have to get to work on time. Coming to work as scheduled. One employer said people do not know when they get a job they have to come to work. They would get the job and just not show up or be out two or three days a week. Following directions and problem solving and working well with others. When you are on your phone all the time you probably think you are working well with others, but then you get in their personal space and there is a whole energy level that goes on. Fear of success, people don't know what to do with that especially if they had not had success in their own family or their environment that they had grown up in. Considering convenience over commitment, people want things in 30-seconds. What is the vision? Helping them see the vision to the commitment that gets them to that success to where they need to be. Little to no parental involvement or encouragement to complete school, a degree, go on to college or to keep the job. That was inspiration. Lack of knowledge of the many different kinds of jobs in the area. She commented technology was a beautiful thing, but it was also diluting how we find information. You can post something and 30-seconds later 500 other things have stacked on top of it. Where are they going to find information? That is one of their challenges as well.

Ms. Johnson discussed some of the past initiatives. Thanks to COVID, it kicked them where it hurt, because they felt like they were finally getting some traction on being in the community, particularly around the City of Hickory for the Catawba level outreach. She referred to the PowerPoint of a list of some of the past initiatives. She referred to the photo and advised it was taken last summer at Highland Recreation at a Back to School Bash. They were handing out things and talking to people and parents. A current initiative they had going on, in collaboration with the Ridgeview Community and the City of Hickory, was the Concerned Citizens of Ridgeview was trying to figure out how they could corner their way to offer some directs to NCWorks Career Services. Thanks to COVID, the one on one how to get involved with people had slowed them down a little bit, but they were hopeful as they talk through it and set a plan that the plan would be ready and they could get to where they need to be either through the recreation center, or the Ridgeview Library. There was a lot of balls in the air about that. There was a small group that they met with to help them. Ms. Karen Dickerson helped to set that up to talk to a core group of people so they could hear from the community. She commented it was unfair for her to think that she knew what everybody needed. They wanted to hear from the community on what they

needed and what needed to happen. They were also going to be focusing on some outreach countywide library directors in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba, as well as the Housing Authority. Trying to figure out who gets right to the core of the people bypassing technology. They would still do the technology thing, but they need to get back to some grassroots of one on one conversation. That was something that Mr. Charles Mackie had brought up at their meeting, maybe they need to get back to door to door. Don't be surprised if someone from NCWorks comes knocking on your door in the future to let them know what was going on the community.

Ms. Johnson referred to the PowerPoint and advised it was a snapshot of www.ncworks.gov versus Indeed. She advised this was called nonduplicate. If you see a team assembler position, maybe there are ten positions, you are only seeing one, which was why the numbers appeared lower than what Mr. Wood mentioned earlier. She advised people also use Indeed because people use that tool as well. She advised they both were around 700, about 1,400 jobs. If you added all the duplicated jobs in there it would probably be 2,000 to 2,500. She commented there were all different types of jobs from part-time to full-time, manufacturing, healthcare, and transportation. They didn't mind where they searched for a job, if it was Indeed, they would help them. If they wanted to use NCWorks they would help them. Their goals were to increase the persons economic mobility and be successful in life to whatever that looks like for them.

Ms. Johnson referred to the PowerPoint and shared some success stories. She thought data was a great thing and there were always people attached to that data and that was what was most important. She noted that Jailen, finished at the end of last year. He was part of the internship program. He went to HCAM. They had offered him a permanent position. He turned out to be a really good worker and was really excited about that opportunity. She referred to the PowerPoint and discussed Hussein which was two years ago. He also worked with a NEXTGEN Career Advisors. He attended Hickory High. The last word was he was enrolling in the mechatronics program at CVCC. She referred to Lakaishia on the PowerPoint. She was the girl she mentioned earlier. She thought she wanted to go into the medical assistant program, she was in it about two weeks and decided that it wasn't for her. She had some family members who were in truck driving and that was what she thought she wanted to try, and she did. She had been a success. She worked for one company for a while, she got recruited away and now she is a trainer. That's where it goes back when you talk about inspiration, and what's happening at home, and who was speaking these words to these children to get them to aspire to do more. Technology was great, but they know statistically that the number one way people find their jobs was through family and friends. It was up to them as a whole to speak that positive language into these kids and get them where they need to go. Maybe even reenergize adults that have fallen out of the workforce, especially if they have been out a longtime. How do we get them inspired to move forward and be successful?

Ms. Johnson advised they were on a lot of social media outlets because that was where you reach young people. They actually created a TikTok account. One of their staff does that, and they get a lot of hits on that. They shared their resume workshop with Hickory High School and Alexander Central, some of the teachers had reached back to them and they have those good relationships that kind of helps them out particularly during these virtual spaces of what goes on. She asked for any questions.

VI. Discussion

Mr. David Roberts II, Pastor of Morning Star First Baptist Church, thanked Ms. Johnson and Dr. Hinshaw for the information they had presented. It was excellent and exciting. He advised he was on the other end of the spectrum. He works with a lot of homeless. He was a retired Navy veteran and he works with the veterans. He also deals with the young folks a lot. He hadn't heard much about social skills training, or sensitivity from employers. He mentioned that veterans were very skilled because they teach them the skills in the military. He advised what he was finding out was there was a revolving door. They were doing a great job in skilled training and all of that, but they get the job, and bosses are still thinking like the old bosses. They still think I am the boss, I am in charge, what I tell you what you will do, or I will fire you. Young folks now a days will just walkout the door. They are not teaching discipline anymore in school. They can't discipline them anymore because Social Services won't let you touch nobody to discipline them anymore. Kids come out with no respect, no discipline, no social skills, and no morals. They will take the money, the first few checks, and then they are gone. He asked in the one on one sessions were they talking about the social skills and the sensitivity that was required. Like the boss man yelling at you or he may raise his voice. A lot of them would snap at him, but they won't have a job.

Ms. Johnson wished one of her NEXTGEN coaches was present because they do a lot of that conversation with the 16 to 24-year-old(s). Sometimes they are in that revolving door, back and forth. Coaching was not a one-time conversation, it was ongoing. She wouldn't say they got penalized but that was the hard work to put a number on. They may have worked with an individual for six months to a year before they can get them to a social level where they could operate over some criticism or being talked to in a not so sensitive way. It was working through them with that, especially the young people. Don't quit, stick with it. Their NEXTGEN folks, the kids would call them before they would call their boss if something isn't right. They are working with them quicker. She wished it was quicker than the sometimes six months to a year conversation. When they can the door opens, and they have that relationship. They also try to

talk to the employer about what was going on. They were able to get one employer to change their title of a job description, it said cutter or knifer. What? Not sure I want to be that. They could have some of those conversations with the employer sometimes it just becomes sensitive. That was something they were talking about a lot and it takes a lot of coaching and correcting to get people to where they need to be.

Ms. Felicia Culbreath-Setzer, Regional Operations Director for the Department of Commerce Northwest Prosperity Zone commented that Ms. Johnson was being a little modest. They talk to them about culture, and training at CVCC. A lot of times what happens was people put supervisors in roles because they have experience, but they don't know how to supervise. They don't understand that you manage processes and lead people. They deal with employers on that level and talk to them about culture. Talking to them about the GenX population and who these young people are. The NEXTGEN career advisors, most of them, are young people. That helps with helping them, but they work with the employers as well. Not only does that vernacular has to change for young people but it also has to change for employers, because they also understand there is a way to talk to people. They have to understand there was a way to say the things that they need to be done without being dispiriting. They do have that piece with employers that they deal with employers as well.

Mr. Sam Hunt, NAACP President commented the branch had much discussion on establishing a commission and to do so they first had to have a meeting with the Mayor, because what they presented they wanted to know what the Mayor thought about it. They then included City Council members and met with each one of them. The goal was what they could do to help African-American and other minorities in the county. They discussed it and really didn't come up with a solution. They thought this would come out and they would get information from the whole community, the City of Hickory, Catawba County, and Western Piedmont Council of Governments, and put all of this in motion. He referred to the Mayor's proclamation, and some people didn't care about the manner in which he did it. They didn't know the way he did it was because of the bigger views of all Mayors and it had to include the Council. They went to the Mayor about that. They tried to get the Mayor to come on board with a meeting, but the Mayor felt like it was an issue for NAACP. He advised they met with City Manager Warren Wood and he suggested that the Western Piedmont Council of Governments could provide information. His biggest concern, and the branch's biggest concern had come from the information that was provided. They would need to knock on doors to share the information about employment, because if they are not skilled, they are going to stay home. If you're not skilled and you're staying home, you don't have a plan. He thought this information was fantastic, but it can't be just talk. Let's do something. He thought one of the first things they were going to do was knock on doors and share the information. They need to come up with a program to continuously get them to come to the centers so they could present the information to them. He mentioned that he went to the service because he couldn't get a job. When he came back, he attended CVCC for computer programming. Three months before graduation time, he hated computer programming. He ended up coming back and became a safety manager for 15-years. It means a better life. He advised he was going to try and contact young people and share these job opportunities with the young people.

Mr. Johnny Scott, Equity Diversity Special Projects Coordinator at CVCC referred to Dr. Hinshaw's comment that brought up a childhood memory of his, which was not always good, about them sitting around at the dinner table having conversations. It came to mind, as a kid he didn't have a dinner table. He described where his family ate their meals. Sometimes they have to try and visualize, if they could, what other people are going through. He thought the challenge of the community was for White people to pull themselves out of their whiteness and listen to what was going on. Going forward they have to start trying to understand where people come from. If and when they go out, they have to meet people where they are, not where they want them to be. He asked if they could imagine their lives without hope. He mentioned there were some pretty accomplished people in the room. He would dare say that at some point in time that they hoped for something. They hoped to graduate, not be a super senior for like seven years. There was that hope, but understand a lot of young people, a lot of young minority students don't have hope. They can't even imagine getting beyond 22 or 25. He challenged everyone, particularly if they were White, to put their whiteness aside and listen to what was being said, and if they could, feel what people were saying. He got the sense that Black people were chomping at the bit to let them know how they feel, and what they feel. It cannot be about us.

Mayor Guess recognized Executive Director, Anthony Starr from Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) and others from the WPCOG. He explained that the WPCOG was the entity that the City used to get the facts. When he first spoke to City Manager Warren Wood, they wanted the facts and the WPCOG was the entity that was able to do that and presented the information to the City. He appreciated their partnership, not only in the beginning, but as they continue through this process, he was sure they would continue with them. He mentioned that he was an alumni of Catawba Valley Technical Institute (CVTI) and the name was changed to Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC). He understood that, but it almost appeared to him that they were coming full circle and it was still Catawba Valley Technical Institute. He saw the crowd and how many people were engaged in the process. He was inspired. He wrote 3-C's. He thought this was where they were at. It all started with communication, a dialogue. He thought that was still an important part of this. Another one was connectivity. Everything that had been talked about today. At the City they were creating connectivity with the trails, and the pathways that they see coming about, and that was all about economic development. All that connectivity was about creating destinations and growing the economy and the population. It was also the connectivity in the room of the people. They had heard about some connectivity that they may didn't know about before the meeting. They have to continue not only with the

connectivity throughout the City and the County, but they have to continue with the connectivity with the communications. It had been said many times today that not everyone has the same opportunities and the same knowledge that others in the room may have. He thought it was their responsibility as they leave the meeting today to be able to share that knowledge about connectivity that they each have with those folks that they come into contact with each and every day. The third one, and probably the most important one as he looked around the room, was about caring. He believed that everyone present and others that couldn't be there cared about the community and the people and the future of the folks that live, visit and work in the metropolitan area. He commented they were going to continue; it was not they had come today and now it was over. They were going to continue to partner and offer these types of workshops as the opportunities become available and as they have different partners and have different things that they address, not only in Hickory, but in the Hickory area. He welcomed their input and discussion and appreciated them being present and being engaged. He thought that was probably the most important thing. He would provide the opportunity if anyone had a specific question or had something to add before they adjourned.

Mr. Mervin Sealy thanked City Manager Warren Wood. They went to the City with a request to set up a commission to do what they were doing today. They meet with some resistance. They were told that the Hickory Branch should do it. They look around and see the people here today, Hickory Branch couldn't pull all of these people together to do what they were doing today. His challenges for the City of Hickory, City Manager Warren Wood went out and got the report. It was not only the minority community that they understood, it was the whole community. It was about the majority and minority community. Look back at the report and see where we are failing in Hickory. He asked City Council to setup a task force/commission so Hickory can become an All-American City that they want it to be. They could pull in some of these people that were present today. They were willing to work with them and do what they could to make sure that Hickory becomes a better and more All-American City. He said they were asking again and now that they had seen the report, let's work together.

Mr. Walter Witherspoon discussed sensitivity. He asked if sensitivity improved or hindered production. Those in the workforce say that was what it was all about, production. He didn't think so. He didn't know about the expectations. He thought they had perceived ideas or expectations. You look at him and perceive what he can produce. They perceive that he could probably learn. They said earlier there were opportunities that were presented. They were discussing job opportunities for people, but where are the people. Some maybe would come, but some may be apprehensive to coming here and stating their needs. He didn't know what their needs were. Maybe we need to ask those folks. The leaders can't sit back and say I got mine, you get yours. Add more programs and more committees. What do these events do? They sit there and discuss things here, but where is the action. Where do we go from here? We are not sitting here solving problems, we are sitting here with ideas and hope that they solve problems, but how to we get those ideas afloat. How do we get those people that we are trying to convince that there is a better way? How do they do that as leaders? He sees young kids and they don't know where they are going. Do they expect the government to take care of them? He referred back to sensitivity and the boss scenario and that the young kids would question them. How do they reach that person? You give them a degree or a certificate to go out and produce, but we don't give them the social skills. You teach them social skills, but the boss doesn't know about social skills he knows about production. You get fired because you ask questions. You ask how you could improve yourself, and this person doesn't have time to explain it to you. He liked the idea of preparing them for an interview. He could have the skills to take the job, he may be nervous, but he could do the job. He got a bad interview therefore he didn't get the job. He reiterated sensitivity for the younger folks, you can't do it for the older folks like him 83 years old.

Ms. Ida Clough, NAACP, commented she had really been impressed with a lot that she had heard. She was very proud to say that the NAACP had help to initiate the process that brought the meeting to fruition. However, she thought that it was extremely important that they don't continue to perpetuate what had turned the distances and the disparities and the inequities among the people of this community as well as the rest of the country. If they are serious, they can't go it alone. As it had already been said the NAACP could not do this alone, they knew that. They also knew that it had to be done. Something had to be done. She heard that some people were interested in doing something, but they have to do it together. The simple fact that the City could arrange a meeting like this was wonderful and it was what they knew, but everybody has to be involved. One thing that they asked for was a commission, or a task force, whatever they wanted to call it, but there has to be a plan. They could do wonderful things, but if those things aren't working towards one end then it was just tying up staff. They need to work together.

Ms. Jerisha Farrer advised she was born and raised in the City and left in 2008 to earn her undergraduate. She moved back two years ago to accept a job at Appalachian State University. During her two years here, she advised there was no programming for ages 3 to 13. The ages 16 to 24 job preparation she had reservations about as well. She discussed the allocation of funds for schools and K-64 policy legislation. She noted that Mr. Robbie Adell was the only Black person on the board of K-64 workforce development partnership and the he was an ex officio member with no voting power. She mentioned incoming police officers, and she didn't see any police officers that looked like her. When she walked in her neighborhood at Ridgeview, Kenworth, and East Ridge, she doesn't see any police officers that looks like her. She has a different policy when it came to policing, but she would love to see a woman who looks like her on the City police force. She discussed the recruitment of that type of officer so she could feel safe in her neighborhood.

Ms. Betty Lohr, retired public school teacher, asked if there were any school board people in

attendance. Several raised their hands. She commented it had been a great presentation and she had learned a lot from it. They were seeing a great trust being made with young people between 16 to 24, but this whole education disparity went much more in the school system, even in the elementary schools, and the graduation rates. They have to get them graduated to get them involved in some of these. She would love to see part of the strategy of this whole effort to be working with the school board, Catawba County as well as Hickory City. Come up with ways to engage these students, at a lower level, for sure middle school. She advised that was the area that she taught in, and work with the middle school students in particular so they are exposed early on to these opportunities that they can come later. Not just focus on high school but get them earlier. That involved curriculum changes, sensitivity, and implicit bias training for teachers. It involved training from the educator's standpoint as well as opportunities to adjust the curriculum so that middle school students see what is available to them at an earlier age and it was not something that they just get in high school. She was glad about the collaboration.

Mr. Bill Garrard advised he had looked at the report and one of the obvious things was a disparity in the income and wealth in the minority population. A lot of people in poverty and the poverty rate was twice what it was for the White population. Good job opportunities were important to change that. He referred to the job development and job skills and asked the leaders if they were tracking how many folks, and what race they were and if they had data. Did they know what was going on in their programs? He knew that the workforce did have some of that. If these are the folks that they need to target are they targeting that? Do they have specific targeted programming that was not just something for everybody? These are the problem children, not in a negative way. This was the issue that they were dealing with, these are the people on the bottom here. Do they have specific things that they are targeting? As you target those folks the whole community was going to rise up and come to economic prosperity.

Ms. Susan Smith Walker advised she understood how hard it was because she was a high school dropout herself and got a GED. The reason she got the GED was because so many people encouraged her to get one. People did not give up on her. People didn't think, oh well she's strung out on drugs and she will make her way somehow. There were people who really kept encouraging her. She got her degree after 18 years. She went to community college first to get it. She understands the struggle of students that have dropped out of school and feel hopeless and don't feel that they are going to make it. You have to keep encouraging them to get their GED and not make it so hard to get it. In some ways it was harder now to get the GED than it was then. If you don't get the GED, then you can't move on. There was no way to take a lot of these classes or participate in a lot of these programs because you are not a high school graduate, or you don't have the GED. She asked them to not forget, the reason that the workforce was so short right now, was the war on drugs started in the 1970's which disproportionately affected African-American minority people with incarceration and criminal records. Some of these people can't get a job, even with a misdemeanor. Even with a few misdemeanors they can't get a job. They have the skills and are eager to work but they are turned away because of a mistake that they have made in the past. Right now, because of the shortage in the workforce, a lot of employers are looking the other way right now where they weren't before. Even if they have policies that say they can't hire people who have criminal records. Some of them are waiving those rules right now. But when the economy gets better will they continue to have that same attitude of giving those people a chance to work? She had a conversation with a very influential person in the community who was connected to one of the top elected officials on a national level, and she said she thought it was really awesome how some of the employers right now are willing to give people a chance regardless of their criminal record because of the shortage in the workforce, but what will happen later. What will happen when the economy was better? When these people are not needed as much as they are right now. The answer she got was well that is supply and demand. The supply goes up and they hire workers that don't have criminal records, the demand for the ones that do would go down. It was heartless and cold, and he looked her right in her eye and said that is the way it works. That was exactly as she thought, that was the way it works, that supply and demand. We are talking about human-beings, people. She asked for them to put that in the plans. She advised there were so many people who would love to work but they had given up, they just don't even try. Some of them work through a temp agency right now, they are not as strict when they go through a temp, but they're never going to get hired, they would always be a temp. She thanked everyone.

Mr. Cliff Moone mentioned he had been involved in the community a lot and he enjoyed it. He had the privilege of teaching at CVCC on and off for 15-years. He was grateful for the presentation. He had the privilege of working with Mr. Witherspoon for a number of years on the Citizens for Equity in Government. He mentioned a couple of things that he didn't hear today that he thought should be added. One was a lot of reasons people don't come out to these things, a lot of reasons young people don't get involved in these kinds of activities, was they have no earthly idea how to access the levels of power. They have no idea and they are intimidated. He referred to his 33-year-old daughter, and she was White, and had White privilege all of her life. She doesn't get that sometimes, but she is one of these people who doesn't think that it makes any difference when you vote or not vote. He noted that he was so involved, but she thinks it doesn't make any difference at all, they do what they want to do. He commented that they need civic education and they need to teach their young people how to access the levels of power and how to access the people. He had never been turned away by anybody when he tried to do it, but he knew how to get to those people. He mentioned something that had changed his mind in the midst of all of this, because this is wonderful. He commented it was an old saying the soft discrimination of low expectations. They talked about the 70 percent and how to get better jobs. They go through the system and go to college and get their degree. They need college leaders and college trained leaders. The real key was to never put a limit on somebody's possibilities. He thought that at 71 ½ years old, he could not put aside his whiteness. He couldn't because he

was White. He was raised during the time of integration, but he was raised in segregation too. Don't misunderstand him, what he could do was listen to those that were different from him. We all can. He thought that they had done that process again today and could continue to review it.

Mayor Guess wanted to make sure that anyone who had a question or concern that they had the opportunity to voice that. He appreciated everyone being present but realized that not everyone who wanted to be present could be. The meeting would be available for anyone to watch within the next 24-hours. One of the challenges they had with this from the very beginning was trying to attract and get all of the entities, all of the people at the table that needed to be at the table. By everyone showing up it certainly showed that they were interested in having a seat at the table. They wanted to keep this going and wanted to get the word out. Everyone was invited to have a seat at the table. They would continue to provide those opportunities as they move forward and have future workshops.

Ms. Ittily Carson, Vice Chair, Board of Education for Hickory Public Schools, referred to the young lady who referred to the school board and she was pretty sure that the same joy was being shared by the other districts, but in the Hickory District they have partnerships with not only CVCC, but Lenoir-Rhyne College, and Appalachian State University. She may not know that there are some avenues with getting the middle school students also involved. She advised their Communications Director Beverly Snowden was present. She mentioned that this was the first day, she hoped it was not the last. Progress was miserable and many times you are going to have to put a date on something to see the progress. She would like to see the date when they have other meetings and whatnot, and they need to proceed forward to making those things happen. She commented today was a work meeting, now they need an action meeting. That was what she would like to hear about, Was that in the works? Do we have a date moving forward? They have got to come forward with an action plan so the next time they get together they can form a task force in order to make all of these wonderful things that have blossomed in this room come alive. Something must happen next in order for them to measure what they had done here today and see how far they have come. How do they effectively apply what was said today? How was it working by the next time they were getting together? Could this be a quarterly meeting? Could this be something like that? She didn't know all of the parties that had come together, she knew of three entities. This must happen. She didn't want what had happened here today to stay within the four walls. They have to go out and tell somebody. Sometimes you have got to look at things as joy and joy was meant to be shared. What she had experienced in the room had been nothing but joy, and she thought that each and everyone that had said something or had participated by just being present and just seeing a rainbow of the district here. She mentioned that the elephant in the room was systemic racism and it went all the way to the top. They have got to be the unit united that can change that, but they have got to look at the man in the mirror on both sides of the track. Blood ran through her veins on both sides of the track here in Hickory. She was born here, raised here, a student, a parent, and now on the school board, and she works here. This was her home and it mattered to her. She thanked everyone and looked forward to seeing them and more. She realized this meeting was targeted to specific individuals, specific organizations and she hoped the next meeting would be a little more diverse with more people in the community so they could hear from them, because it sounded like to her they really wanted to hear from them, and the best way to do it was to invite them. She thanked everyone.

- VII. Alderwoman Patton moved, seconded by Alderwoman Williams to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously. At approximately 1:55 p.m. the discussions concluded, and the meeting was adjourned.

Mayor

City Clerk