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A Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hickory was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on Monday, February 6, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., with the following members present:

Tony Wood	Hank Guess	VACANT
Charlotte Williams	Aldermen	David P. Zagaroli
Danny Seaver		Jill Patton

A quorum was present.

Also present were City Manager Warren Wood, Deputy City Manager Rodney Miller, Assistant City Manager Rick Beasley, City Attorney John Crone, Deputy City Attorney Arnita Dula, Deputy City Clerk Crystal B. Mundy, and City Clerk Debbie D. Miller

Also present were the applicants: Jerisha V. Farrer, Rev. Dr. Anthony Freeman, Anetia Ramseur Wright, Jarrell Jett, Samuel E. Hunt, and Ittily T. Carson

- I. Mayor Guess called the meeting to order. All Council members were present.
- II. Interview of Applicants for the Ward 4 Alderman Vacancy

Mayor Guess stated Council's purpose this evening was to interview the applicants who had applied for the vacancy on the Ward 4 position on City Council. Alderman David Williams who had served and was elected by the people as Council person for Ward 4, at the beginning of the year he announced that he would be resigning from the Council due to the fact that he was moving outside the Ward and outside of the City limits. So that was the reason for this vacancy on Ward 4. He asked everyone to silence any electronic devices that they may have. They had six applicants, six people who had applied for the vacancy in Ward 4. He would call those six individuals alphabetically by their last name. They would each have approximately 15-minutes, Council would have questions, and each applicant would have opening and closing statements. He advised Council would not be taking any questions from the audience. All the questions and all the direction would come from Mayor Guess and City Council this evening. He called the first applicant, alphabetically Ms. Carson. He asked her to the podium and advised there were just a couple of formal things he would like to start with and then they would start right in with her three minutes after that. For the record he asked her to please state her full name, the address where she resided, what ward that address was in and how long she had lived there.

Ms. Ittily Carson stated her full name, and her address, 364 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue Drive SW, in the South Side Heights community. She lived in Ward 4 and had been there for over 30-years of her life. She had owned a home there for almost 28-years.

Mayor Guess explained the process. Council would allow each applicant up to three minutes to tell Council anything that they would like to tell them about as an opening statement. Then after the opening statement Council would ask questions and before they concluded Council would allow her up to two minutes to follow-up. Council anticipated each applicant's time being around 15-minutes. He noted there was a clock at the Clerk's desk that would give the total time. They were trying to keep each one of them about 15-minutes total. He asked her to begin with her introduction.

Ms. Carson thanked Council for allowing this process to be. She was so joyful just to see how many applicants they had for this position. The interest that there had been to fill this position because they had so many concerned citizens and people that actually want to do the work. She was one of those people that would love to do the work. She was a native of Hickory, was born in Hickory in 1969. She was a mother of two, grandmother of three, and a proud graduate of the 1987 Hickory High School Class. Presently, for almost nine years, she had served on the Hickory Public School Board of Education as she was appointed in 2014. She believed that she would be a good fit for this role because this was a vision and a passion for her that she had for a very long time in her life. Getting involved with the Board of Education, this was an ultimate goal, this was the next goal that she had, whether it be at this appointed time or another time, but this was something that she would be seeking. She believed that the qualities that she has, a business minded person, being an entrepreneur, she had worked for 28-years at the same facility, which was Bumbarger's Office Furniture USA. She had made a lot of great relationships with people all over the City and the great metropolitan areas as she has served. She knew that it was going to be a very hard decision for Council, but she would love to be one in the number to serve this great City and to assist, and to be their partner in the government of the City of Hickory.

Mayor Guess noted this was a Council appointment, but in November, the public would elect not only the Ward 4 seat, but the other seats that were up. This would be an appointment until November and then there would be an election. He wanted to clarify that as well. He asked Alderman Wood for the first questions.

Alderman Wood thanked Ms. Carson for being present and for her interest. A lot of what Council does was to reach compromise, reach agreement when they may start out in disagreement on an item. He asked her, from a professional perspective, to tell him about a time when she disagreed with somebody on a topic and had to work through that to reach a compromise.

Ms. Carson responded they have that all the time on the Board of Education. She noted they had seven people, some with very similar backgrounds, some with very different backgrounds, but she commented at the end of the day, it had to be a Board that speaks. They each could have individual concerns and she had needed to be able to express her concerns and many times just

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to make sure she was heard. Many times it was not so much as her being heard on the issue, but to understand what she was trying to convey. She thought that had been a strong suit that she has. She had been able to get her point across in support of a matter. When the vote comes down, if they disagree on something, there was going to be a majority and one that was not majority. That was something that no matter if it does not go your way, you have to let the Board speak and the Board would speak from a majority rule.

Alderwoman Williams asked what she felt were the three most pressing concerns facing the City of Hickory in 2023 and beyond.

Ms. Carson commented she would bring in her experience with the Board of Education as they had definitely had the need to bring about diversity, equity and inclusion. She loved the way the City was progressing. She reiterated she was a native and she had been here for a long time. Just to see all the many things that Council had already done and was doing. The companies that they were attracting here to the community that provided jobs, and the new housing that was coming about. She was overjoyed to be a resident here and did not plan on moving anytime soon. Having good housing, having good jobs, they have to have it here. The City used to be a city of much more industrial activity, whereas, there was a big lull from that, but she thought it was coming back and she applauded Council for what they had done to attract new businesses already to this area and provide the housing for those people that would come.

Alderman Seaver thanked Ms. Carson for being here and her interest in serving. Along that line he asked what areas of City functions interested her the most and if she had served on any Boards or Commissions before with the City or anything as far as the City government.

Ms. Carson commented what interested her most was the planning and the development. She thought that it may be from her background as a space plan designer and meeting with folks that she had actually supplied the furniture for their office. She knew quite a few folks already at the City that worked here. The planning, the going forth and what was coming next. She knew there was a grand scheme of things already in place from 20-years ago and she would like to be one on the team to be able to continue to plot the next 5, 10, 20-years and see that this was still going to be a place that she wants to live.

Alderman Zagaroli thanked Ms. Carson again for coming and expressing her views. He asked what her view of the role of the local government was in Hickory. What was Council's role?

Ms. Carson replied there was much policy, there were a lot of funding that comes and goes and they have to be discerning, good fiduciary agents in order to be able to know what was best to be prioritized to have funding spent there or maybe it was not a no, maybe it was not yet. She thought that was a lot of what they have to do, because she knew they definitely had to do that on the Board that she already serves on. A lot of it was that. Not only that, but also reaching the community to know what the needs of the community were so that they could do what was necessary all throughout the City. She was glad that they have a City government that had Wards, so that they get a representation from all over the city. She thought that was very paramount for their government.

Alderwoman Patton asked Ms. Carson if she had a specific goal that she would like to accomplish during her tenure.

Ms. Carson commented as she said, the planning and development of bringing newness to the City and also being able to interact with the folks that live here. Bringing constituent's matters to the board if she needs to and bring that for discussion. She wanted to stand in the gap. She thought all social strata. She loved being able to communicate with, and to connect with, and to be able to serve. She noted she was a servant leader at heart first and foremost that was one thing. She wanted to make sure that the people get their needs met wherever they are in this City.

Mayor Guess asked Ms. Carson what she thought were some things that she could do personally that would help to enhance the relationships and the communications they have with their citizens.

Ms. Carson commented a lot of times it was primarily just the conversations. Whether it was an individual conversation or conversation amongst a group of people, that was a larger group of people and you have got to meet them where their needs are. You have got to meet them right where they are and be able to hear, seriously listen, to what was being said to what was being needed and be able to be part of the solution because she really believed if they were not going to be part of the solution then they may be part of the problem. Being a part of the solution was very important to her and that was her concept of anything that she does. She meets the function first and then they could pretty it up. They have got to find out what the issues were and then implement, have that discussion to discuss what they could do to fix it. Not to cover it up, not to put a band-aid on it, but to fix it and make it better. She thought if the process was done then a means to an end being on a positive note would happen and sure in many of those scenarios it was going to take a whole lot of compromise.

Mayor Guess thanked Ms. Carson. He asked Council if there was anything that a Council member would like to ask or anything else before they gave her time for her closing statement. He advised Ms. Carson she could have whatever time she needed that was left on the clock to say anything or to address anything she had not been able to address.

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Ms. Carson commented as she had said when she began, she knew Council had a hard decision before them. They had a lot of great people right now standing that had sent in their letters of interest. She wanted to impress upon Council that she came to serve and would serve as she was needed to serve in whatever the capacity it was. She wanted to partner with Council, and she wanted to be able to be a part of the City government that keeps this City Well-Crafted. She lived in a well-crafted city, and she wanted to maintain that status not only just for her and her grandchildren, but for those to come. She thanked Council for what they were already doing and for the care and the concern that they had given. She looked forward to serving with them.

Mayor Guess asked if there was anything they could answer for her.

Ms. Carson advised she had read a lot. She had already got a lot of those answers just from the research and study. If she was anything she was the queen of research. She definitely had a lot of answers already in place. She thanked Council for their time and for allowing her to speak with them today and for accepting her letter of interest. She looked forward to serving with them.

Alderman Wood asked Ms. Carson if she knew if she was allowed to serve on the School Board and another elected position at the same time.

Ms. Carson advised they had a member that actually served on both. He was elected Sheriff at the same time he was elected a Board member on the very same night. They did not have any isms or schisms with that. If there was, whatever was necessary, this was paramount to her. She would do whatever was necessary.

Alderman Wood thanked her for the clarification.

Ms. Carson advised if they found out something that she did not know, they had a board member that served in two elected positions at the same time.

Alderman Seaver commented it could come down to a coin flip.

Ms. Carson commented if it came down to a coin flip she thought they would need to know that she was on their team.

Mayor Guess and Council members thanked Ms. Carson.

Mayor Guess called the next applicant Jerisha Farrer to the podium. He explained the process to Ms. Farrer. Council would allow each applicant a total of around 15-minutes or so, up to three minutes for her introduction and approximately 8-10-minutes' worth of questioning, and then two minutes at the end for her to address anything that she felt was pertinent or perhaps that she did not get to say that she would like to say. He asked her for the record to state her name, the address where she resided, what Ward she resided in, and how long she had resided there.

Ms. Jerisha Farrer stated her name, and her address, 625 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue Drive SE, Hickory, North Carolina, Ward 4, and she had lived there for the past 32-years of her life.

Mayor Guess asked her to proceed with her three-minute introduction.

Ms. Farrer greeted Mayor Guess and Council members. She reiterated her name and commented she was a tried and true native of Hickory, North Carolina, throughout her life, service and commitment was all she had done and studied in any community she had participated with or in. Though she had very strong roots in Ward 4, the City of Hickory had always been with her in every step she had taken as an adult navigating this world. While navigating this world she had always questioned or received questions of when she was going to take these nuggets and this energy and officially give it back to Hickory, North Carolina in the capacity of service and commitment. In her application she submitted for the Ward 4 vacancy she stated that wise community members told her every person was defined by the community they belong to. Those community members were the late Z Ann Hoyle and Reverend Dr. Webster E. Lytle. The week before she left embarking on her post-secondary education journey both members set her down and explained how Hickory would be waiting for her when she was ready to return to define that moment in the capacity of serving those who need her. She was present today to serve and take on what this role would be for the current and future of not just Ward 4, but the City of Hickory. Though she had demonstrated strategic and methodical leadership in past and current positions, if given the opportunity to fill this vacancy, her goals would be to focus on creating opportunities that result in equitable housing options for those who make less than \$50,000 a year combined, reintroduce new visions of pre and after school summer enrichment opportunities through the collaboration of the Department of Social Services, Council of Adolescents, Hickory Parks Recreation and Tourism, and local churches, creating extensive job programs for students in grades 10 through 12 that would focus on the areas of STEAM, which was science, technology, engineering, agriculture and mathematics through the collaboration of the NC Cooperative Extension location and community service block grants. Hold quarterly safety walks for Ward 4 to assess areas of risks, threats, and opportunities. She asked for the questions from the Hickory City Council.

Alderman Williams thanked Ms. Farrer for being present. She asked what she felt were the three most pressing concerns facing the City of Hickory in 2023 and beyond.

Ms. Farrer believed it would be economic development, and what that looks like after COVID-19. The access to education being that our State was growing older. What that looks like for adult

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learners who were 35 and up and also access to food and housing stability and what that looks like for the City of Hickory.

Alderman Seaver commented he was looking down his list while she was doing her introduction, and she answered several questions on the list already. He asked if she liked to read.

Ms. Farrer replied yes, she had a very extensive library.

Alderman Seaver noted Council gets a lot of required reading with what they do with everything really. They were responsible for just about everything as far as how it was governed and how it was handled in the City of Hickory. And she would have a lot of catching up to do. He asked her what areas of the City's functions that most interested her. He knew she had said a lot of things that she was interested in which was a really long list. He asked her what areas most interested her.

Ms. Farrer advised what most interested her would probably be the human relations part or the relationships that come with that, being part of the community, you have to be able to relate to someone, find out their past experiences, their caring experiences, and how they intertwine that with what they expect of the City. Managing expectations of not just Ward 4 but citizens of Hickory. Knowing that they could not all suit everyone's dislikes and likes but come to a common ground to understand that there was a place that they could create for everyone to use, not just one particular part of the City but all of the City when it comes to the usage of the facilities and services.

Alderman Seaver thanked Ms. Farrer for her interest and being here tonight.

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

Ms. Farrer saw this as a two-edged sword and the opportunities and challenges would be technology. With technology growing literally every 30-days it could either make or break how they view their economic development and how they infuse it into their policies and procedures as well as how it trickles down to the daily usage of citizens. For example, when she was driving down 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Center Street and sees Metronet putting in the wiring for the Wi-Fi that would be along the City Walk, she thinks about the long-term aspect of that. They have technology there for now, but what would it look like when it comes to the configuring of their traffic ways? What would it look like in the opportunity of increasing access for homes using that Wi-Fi? Does it also bring in more jobs in the instance of how to connect those with that Wi-Fi to partaking in employment opportunities to have access to it. That was the opportunities and challenges that she saw when it comes to economic development.

Alderwoman Patton asked Ms. Farrer if she had ideas on local government improvements that she felt had not been considered or discussed publicly.

Ms. Farrer commented to be honest, she did not have any ideas because when it comes to her experience in local government, she had not experienced local government in the sense of holding a position. She believed if she gave an answer it would be coming from a biased view and she did not believe in giving a biased view before she even gave a take on it, because she lived by "can't knock it till you try it".

Mayor Guess asked Ms. Farrer what she thought were the three most important steps that the City could take to enhance their relationships and communications with their citizens.

Ms. Farrer commented first sitting down and looking over the strategic plan that was currently in place, on what that communications look like, but also second trying to figure out who utilizes or interacts or engages the most with their communications, something as simple as foot traffic on the local website, on the City's local website, social media engagement as well as here when it comes to communication. Third looking at how to expand the outreach plan when it comes to communication and not just for Ward 4, but all Wards. Being that there may be different levels of comprehension for those who may interact with communications, there may be language barriers who interact with communications but there also may be, just a simple fact of those who may not know that we have these avenues that exist.

Mayor Guess asked if there were any further questions or follow-up questions that Council had?

Alderman Wood advised he had not asked his questions.

Mayor Guess apologized for the oversight.

Alderman Wood thanked Ms. Farrer for being here and for being so prepared. He was enjoying listening to her answers. He asked what she saw as the value of the bond projects that they had underway beyond providing recreational activities for the citizens of Hickory.

Ms. Farrer commented this was coming from a biased standpoint being that she used to work for Appalachian State 2019 -2021, the Chancellor at the time Cheryl Everette, came to her and asked her about Hickory and she explained to her how Hickory had the bond come in and it was expanding the opportunities within the City. Granted she did not know if that was a deciding factor but she was pretty sure there was some other strategic plans that came with it, but to see the fact that Appalachian State now had a location for students to come and pursue higher education, if they decided to stay here after they graduated from the County system schools or

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the public schools or if they want to transfer from CVCC and continue their journey onto App State. That was the value she saw from that bond project even though it was not a direct indication of it, but when you have a city that includes higher education in its purpose and plans the social up mobility of that city increases as it goes.

Alderman Wood thanked Ms. Farrer.

Mayor Guess asked if anybody else had any follow-up questions they would like to ask. He advised Ms. Farrer the remaining time was hers and she could take as much of it as she would like and let Council know anything perhaps that she would like for them to know that they did not ask.

Ms. Farrer commented in her closing remarks she asked Council to make the right choice in filling this vacancy. In the past six years she believed they had missed out on some very intricate things and opportunities to sit at the table to ensure that voices were being heard, all voices were being heard, information was being fairly distributed, and decisions were being made with all sides being presented. She pleaded if they did not believe she was fit for this position that they select Anetia Wright for this position to work alongside of them in order to get Ward 4 onboard with what was coming in the next 7 to 10-years.

Mayor Guess and Council members thanked Ms. Farrer.

Mayor Guess asked Reverend Dr. Anthony Freeman to the podium. He explained the same instructions as he had given the other applicants to be fair. Council was allowing roughly 15-minutes total for this interview process. He would have roughly three minutes for an introduction. After that they would have a series of questions that would last roughly 8 to 10-minutes and then Council would allow him the last remaining time to tell them anything that he would like to tell them or perhaps that they did not ask or that he did not get to tell them. He noted there was a clock over to the left. He asked him to state his name for the record, the address where he resided, what Ward he resided in and how long he had lived at his current residence.

Reverend Dr. Anthony Freeman stated his name, he lived at 492 Catawba Valley Boulevard SE, Hickory, North Carolina, he had lived in Ward 4 for nine-years.

Mayor Guess advised he could start his three-minute introduction.

Reverend Dr. Freeman did not know which one would be easier as it related to having a public interview in front of City Councilman or just campaigning and running for an election, but he would see how this goes. A lot of people may know him in the City. He served as the Pastor of Clinton Tabernacle AME Zion Church and had been the Pastor for nine years. He was thankful and grateful for the opportunity to serve the wonderful people there. As a matter of fact, some of them were present tonight. He advised he did not want to ever offer himself in such a position without having their support and their prayers. He asked for a couple of them to please stand that he might be able to recognize them tonight. Citizens in the audience stood. He advised one of his favorite authors was John Maxwell, which said "you can't be a leader without a follower". It was the follower that makes the leader and he wanted to be thankful and grateful for the confidence and the trust that the parishioners at Clinton Tabernacle had put inside of him. He advised his education consisted of an Associate Degree in Applied Science from Briarwood Junior College, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice from Johnson C. Smith University, a Master's in Divinity and a Doctoral and Theology from Hood Theological Seminary. He thanked Alderman David Williams for his service and what he had meant to Ward 4, and the whole City of Hickory. The primary purpose of why he had been sent to the City of Hickory was to serve the wonderful people of Clinton Tabernacle. Him offering himself to fulfill the vacant seat for Ward 4 included Clinton Tabernacle, because he believed you could not have a church without a community. He believed the pivotal purpose for any City Council member, elected or in this relevant moment appointed, should always possess the passion of making their City an exceptional place to live. Any elected official or in their case tonight one that may be appointed by the City Council takes on the tremendous commitment of being a voice a vote, more importantly the heart of citizens in the community. In his line of profession, it was completely clear that people lives, where they live, how they live, should never be taken for granted and never absolutely mistaken as irrelevant. Some may wonder the question about the relationship between faith and politics, and politics because of the climate in which we live had a negative connotation to it. But politics in his belief, in its simplistic form, was a group of elected individuals entrusted by people to make challenging, difficult decisions so that they could live safe, comfortable, and possibly flourishing lives. He believed himself as it related to being a successful leader one should present themselves accessible. Accessible not only to a sect of people, but accessible to everyone. Available, that someone should be available at all times as related to listening to the needs and the wants of their people. And finally, accountable. Accountability should always rest upon leadership.

Alderman Seaver thanked Reverend Dr. Freeman for being present and he appreciated his interest in what was going on with the City of Hickory, a lot of good things going on and there could be some challenges and so forth. They have some now. He asked what were some of the challenges he thought that Hickory was facing or could be facing in the near future.

Reverend Dr. Freeman advised those in the City who knew him, and would continue on getting to know him, he served very quietly. He did not really seek for position and prestige or recognition. He referred to what they had implemented at Clinton Tabernacle. When the pandemic hit, they partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank and they feed in one day, over 500 people and now since, every third Monday of the month were seeing to it that families that were struggling, that

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they might be able to come to their ministry that they might be able to help them with groceries. Some of the struggles in the City, mind you that he believed every city needs improvement, but he was thankful and grateful for the City that he lived in and where he could supply the need, certainly he tries to supply that need.

Alderman Zagaroli asked how he would best represent the members of Ward 4.

Reverend Dr. Freeman believed he could best represent the members of Ward 4, first of all allowing them to get to know him and certainly getting to know them. He believed someone who was a leader and a visionary, that if they were going to be able to bring solutions to problems, they have got to be able to hear the people and see what their needs were and that was the way that he would present himself to Ward 4.

Alderwoman Patton thanked him for being present. She asked if he had a specific goal that he would like to accomplish during his tenure.

Reverend Dr. Freeman commented receiving an outward nudge of someone saying, hey, you might be a good fit for a City Councilman with much trepidation, he had to pause, and ponder, meditate why me and then why not me? His goal would be, he believed in such a time in these several months leading up to the election was just to build upon the foundation that Alderman Williams had already built and hopefully continue on building the momentum that he begun.

Alderman Wood thanked him for being present. He advised he was going to invite criticism. He asked what he thought the City did well, and what he thought they could do better.

Reverend Dr. Freeman commented first thing first, he enjoyed raising his son, our son here, his wife and their son were present. He and his wife had five children together, one deceased, all of them were out of the household except for one, and he was present tonight. He went to Hickory Christian Academy. One of the things that he enjoyed about the City was that when they first moved into the City that the City embraced them. They showed the neighborly love, they showed harmony and unity and he was thankful and grateful for that. He believed where they could do better as it related to leaders in the community to be more visible and to certainly get as close as they could to those not only those who were in their circle, but those who were outside of their circle. He believed strongly in building relationships.

Alderwoman Williams commented it was great meeting him and she thanked him for being present. He obviously had a wonderful congregation of followers and established himself in the church and surrounding community. She asked if he could elaborate on some specifics in his experience or background relating to any kind of connection with City Commissions/Boards, outside organizations in the community.

Reverend Dr. Freeman commented other than when he first entered into the City, he served a year on the Habitat for Humanity's Board of Directors. Because their son, the last child in the home, he resigned from that Board because he had an opportunity to be the middle school coach/high school coach and it meant everything to invest. He was on a lot of other boards as related within his church. He had a good conversation with his wife, and she reminded him that anyone coming and starting any new job was not going to know anything or everything. He noted he was willing to learn. He would not dare ever think that he had all the answers. Hopefully his experiences so far, would bring some type of impact to the City.

Mayor Guess commented communications and relationships were extremely important to their roles serving on the City Council. He asked what were the three most important steps that he thought the City could take to enhance those relationships and communications with their citizens.

Reverend Dr. Freeman believed related to communicating better with the citizens of Hickory was constantly setting up venues, events, or celebrations. Trying to find out what their likes were and what really caused them to be excited, whether it was the younger generation or the older generation. Just a sense of bringing the community together and in forums or venues like that they could also express where they were in the City and where they plan on taking the City. Another way, certainly a lot of people use social media. He was not a strong proponent of social media, but he knew it was necessary. It had its pros and its cons, but that was also a channel that one could use.

Mayor Guess asked if any Council members had anything they would like to follow up with. He advised Reverend Dr. Freeman there was a little less than three minutes left on the clock. He would allow him to use as much of that three minutes as he would like to tell them anything he would like to tell them to follow-up.

Reverend Dr. Freeman thanked Mayor Guess and City Council. He advised this was certainly very new to him. He asked himself the question why me and why not me? He believed that it was a great opportunity. It was one thing when you are knocking on that door of opportunity, but when opportunity knocks on your door, the question to the answer was will you answer that knock? He believed that when your heart was in the right place, when your heart was really for people, you do not have to seek for position and prestige, because when your heart was right, position and responsibility would find you where you are.

Mayor Guess thanked Reverend Dr. Freeman.

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Alderman Wood commented to Reverend Dr. Freeman, circling back to the question he asked kind of rhetorically earlier about being here or campaigning. He advised campaigning was harder.

Reverend Dr. Freeman thanked Council.

Mayor Guess asked Mr. Sam Hunt to the podium. He reiterated what the process was that he had told the other applicants. They were allowing roughly 15-minutes total. He would start with a three-minute introduction. After that three-minute introduction they would have approximately 8-10-minutes' worth of questioning. After that questioning process, they would allow him the remaining time to tell them anything that he would like to tell them, perhaps that they would not get to cover. Total his time would be approximately 15-minutes and there was a clock to his left with the total time. He would assist with that if necessary. He asked him to state his name for the record, the address that he currently resided, what Ward he resided in and how long that he had lived at that address.

Mr. Samuel Hunt distributed information regarding himself to Council members.

Mr. Samuel Hunt stated his name, he lived at 626 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue Drive SE, Hickory, North Carolina. He was born and raised in Hickory, and had been living at this address since 1980. He was 80-years old.

Mayor Guess confirmed he lived in Ward 4.

Mr. Hunt advised that was correct.

Mayor Guess advised he had up to three minutes for his introduction and he could begin.

Mr. Hunt reiterated he was born and raised in Hickory. In 1960 he graduated from Ridgeview High School. Mortician apprentice and real estate training in Springfield, Ohio after leaving Hickory, Ridgeview High. Those opportunities later helped him with hospice and being on the Historic Preservation Commission. He was drafted in the army in 1964 and some weeks later became a squad leader system platoon guide. He tried to volunteer for the army to be a reporter. And some weeks later after getting in there he became a news reporter for Stars and Stripes for the company he was stationed at. His station was near Anchorage, Alaska at a missile site. His rank was Specialist Five Sergeant. He went to Anchorage Alaska Technical Institute for real estate. When he got back home, and he tried to get a job in real estate he was told that black people do not buy houses. Catawba Valley Technical Institute, now CVCC 1967 – 1969, computer programming was his subject area. He was first Vice President of the Student Government Body, African American. He helped organize the chess club, he was a good chess player. He received Outstanding Student Award. Later, some electronics, he worked for IBM for 15-years. After that a Safety Manager and HR at Synthetic Finishing. Retired in 2003. An adult Sunday School Teacher and sang in the choir at St. Paul AME Zion Church. Sunday School Superintendent and volunteered for 24-years and soon to be 25-years at Carolina Caring Hospice. In September 2020, he received the Volunteer of the Year award for both North and South Carolina with Hospice. Past member of Hickory Community Relations Council and passed member of Hickory City Appearance Commission. Member of Hickory Historic Preservation Commission and Secretary of Hickory Regional Planning Commission. Helped review and update 2030 Land Development Code for the City of Hickory. He made history as the first African American to Chair the Planning Commission meeting. He thought that was very exciting. He had been there 17-years. Three term President and current Secretary of the Hickory Landmarks Society. He received Volunteer of the Year Award. Past President of Hickory Branch NAACP and currently second Vice President. He was excited that they have Ida Clough as their President. Received Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Spirit of King Volunteer of the Year Award. Member of Racial Justice and Reconciliation Group. Member of the Greater Hickory Ministerial Alliance. Member of Catawba Valley Interfaith Council. Member of Catawba County Truth and Reconciliation. The opportunity for him to be in these organizations gave him the opportunity to reach out to the community. Doing so, being with the NAACP President, Vice President now, it had helped them to grow. It had enabled members of the Council to work with them. It had helped all people. He addressed the audience and commented they better start coming back to the meetings. He commented they were present to get a person in this position, in this place to make the whole City come together.

Mayor Guess advised Mr. Hunt they probably needed to move on to the questions.

Alderman Zagaroli asked Mr. Hunt how he would best represent the members of Ward 4.

Mayor Guess interjected in a minute or less.

Mr. Hunt turned to the audience and referred to what he just said, because if that does not make you move and do anything, what else could he say.

Alderman Zagaroli asked him to repeat his answer to Council members. He repeated the question, how he would best represent the members of Ward 4.

Mr. Hunt commented you have to be prepared to address the community, to do so you have to find out what situations the community was going through, then you have to get with your friends and other cohorts who know more than you to discuss the situation with them. When he was becoming President of NAACP, he did not know anything about all this stuff. He was at the Landmarks Society with Professor Russell. He told Professor Russell he had been asked to be

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President and asked him to help him figure out what he should do. He thought a minute and advised Mr. Hunt to surround himself with smart people and do not talk about it.

Alderwoman Patton asked what the three most pressing concerns were facing the City of Hickory.

Mr. Hunt responded youth, youth, and youth. Youth do not know how to act. Youth do not believe anything can happen to them. Youth are not learning anything. Therefore, how could you be a part of anything? How could you build anything? How could you even build yourself?

Alderman Wood commented he would build on the last answer. He asked as a City and as a Council specifically, what did he see if any of the opportunities for Council to address those three problems which happened to be the same in his mind.

Mr. Hunt commented if adults do not see Council helping the community with their presence, they certainly were not going to do anything to help those kids. Money was only temporary. It buys a hot dog or the drink, and once it was gone then what. They have to be involved with it. They came to the City and asked them to help them with a Commission and they said no that was a job for the NAACP. Then it came to them to create a taskforce. They have kids mentoring, tutoring Pre-K, housing, they got all these things going and do not see any of them.

Alderwoman Williams asked how he viewed his role or the City Council person's role in government and what they do. What would that role be? She asked him to explain his perception of that role.

Mr. Hunt noted that Alderman Zagaroli's seat was his chair on the Zoning Commission. His role was he reads through the paperwork that they have to deal with that evening and he reads what was in the newspaper about the Ridgeview Community, and the Hickory Community, etc. He hears what people were saying to him and he tries to use that. He was not the smartest ball on the block, do not have to be because Russ told him to what, surround yourself with smart people. He tries to do that. He tries to listen to what people say and he tries to engage people to help people. You are not going to get anything done unless you were working together.

Alderman Seaver thanked Mr. Hunt for being present tonight. He asked what ways he would communicate with his constituents. What ways does he do that? He knew he had Concerned Citizens of Ridgeview neighborhood meetings. What were some other ways he had of communicating with constituents in his Ward?

Mr. Hunt advised one of his primary ways was Reverend Longcrier. That was one of the hardest working reverends there was. He let him beat him at chess though, do not tell him that. But there was a group of pastors that people have respect for, and they listen to them, and they try to do what they suggest that they should be doing because that was one primary thing that makes things happen. You or they were in their face. When they see you and they hear you and you were providing what you could for them, they would tell somebody else, and they would drag them along. Hickory NAACP had almost more whites in it now and have more whites coming to their meetings because of what he just said.

Mayor Guess advised Mr. Hunt he had approximately two minutes left for his closing statement.

Mr. Hunt commented therefore, based on his above history of involvement with Hickory and its communities, and he does attend Council meetings, not all of them, but they do see him here. That means you have got to come to the meetings, like Hickory Landmarks Society and all the other places. These experiences have better prepared him to be able to step into the vacancy in Ward 4.

Mayor Guess and Council members thanked Mr. Hunt.

Mayor Guess asked Mr. Jarrell Jett to the podium. He explained the process. Council was allowing each applicant roughly 15-minutes. In the beginning they would allow him the first three minutes or so to introduce himself. After he had completed that, Council would ask him a series of questions that would last approximately 8 to 10-minutes. Council would then allow him the remaining time, usually it was around two minutes to tell them anything that he would like to tell them. Perhaps something that he would like to tell them that they did not ask. He asked Mr. Jett for the record to state his name, the address where he resided, what Ward he resided in, and how long he had resided there.

Mr. Jarrell Jett stated his name, and advised he lived at 12 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, Hickory. Other than off at college and in the Navy that had been his home address.

Mayor Guess confirmed his Ward.

Mr. Jett advised Ward 4.

Mayor Guess asked him how long he had lived there.

Mr. Jett advised he was 66, other than being in college, and in the Navy, 60-years.

Mayor Guess advised he could proceed with his three minutes of introduction.

Mr. Jett commented in his letter of interest, he had the road less traveled. He was the first black to attend Hickory's first private school, North State Academy. The only black male to graduate.

That was what set him on a unique path. He felt like in his letter of interest, unfortunately, he felt like it was sort of a situation, it was not a segregation academy, like some in the south where they were trying to get away from integration. But when Dr. King got assassinated when he was in sixth grade, hastily, they realized it was going to be citywide integration the next year. A group of people hastily formed a private school. They started North State Academy waiting for the tensions to die down at Hickory High. That was why he was invited to be part of North State Academy. While there, unfortunately, he felt like he was somewhat exploited in the situation. It was not a segregation academy, but he did not realize until he got back from the Navy and he dated a teacher at Hickory High School and when he went to Hickory High School for the first time he realized the library at Hickory High was bigger than the school building they had at North State Academy. It sort of blew his mind and another thing that blew his mind too because he did not know how they got their accreditation, but North State never did have a library. It seemed like somebody must have gotten paid under the table there was not even a library the whole time he was there. When he got back from the Navy, he approached a lady who was three years behind him and she said, well, Jarrell there was a library. He said there was not. She said once they built the gym, they put a library in a third of the corner of the gym. But again, that happened after he left. The positive thing from it, the whole time he was there, being the only black in his class for all those years, it just became natural, really during the school year, it was more of a white family than a black family as far as spending time with that group of people during the school year. It was important to be able to bridge the racial divide. By him having that experience as a youth he felt like it was almost as natural as breathing because again, he got to do an experience, do the racial divide every single day. He thought he had this brilliant original idea, and he was pretty sure everyone was familiar with Reverend Spearman before he left, he wrote a letter in the Hickory Daily Record, which was hard to read, but to be honest it was sort of truthful. He mentioned Hickory as being genteel apartheid. Knowing Dr. Spearman, he was not being mean spirited or evil at all when he mentioned that. If they would really be honest, there was truth to it, because in the letter, he mentioned about how here in Hickory, we come together at the ball games, at the meetings, but it was mainly superficial and casual interaction without really getting to know one another and that we were still living basically in separate worlds. He referred to Dr. King's dream. When he was in college, he pledged Alpha Phi Alpha, which Dr. King was an Alpha as well as Andy Young. This vision he was trying to bring about Dr. King's beloved vision here in Hickory would be what he would call sister churches. Just like most major cities have sister cities across the ocean, he had this idea where sister churches BBB, building bridges bonds where he would try to get with the Hickory Minister Alliance and he thought they would embrace the idea and proposed instead of just once a year getting together at the King's service where they usually alternate back and forth, have the sister churches, since there are more white churches than black churches, each of the black churches maybe have two other sister white churches. Once a month, either third or fourth Sunday have the pastor designate five or six people from the congregation to go to the other congregation and after having service go out to eat and fellowship because again, what Dr. King said so many years ago was still true, Sunday afternoon, outside the workplace and the businesses whatever, was the most segregated time in America. It was not done with intent or desire, but that was just the way it was. In this proposal, this vision he has with the sister churches, he could see it becoming a model for the whole country. See this place called Hickory, once a month, they were having people from each congregation meet and fellowship, going out to eat, breaking bread and maybe over time it gets to the point where they were so comfortable, they could actually get to the point where you invite somebody of the opposite race actually into your home to break bread and fellowship and get to the point where it was not just superficial and the casual interaction that they were having. He wanted to paint that vision.

Mayor Guess advised Council had some questions for him.

Alderwoman Patton asked Mr. Jett if he had any ideas on local government improvements that he felt had not been considered or discussed publicly.

Mr. Jett commented not off the top of his head. He had been sort of out of the loop. He mentioned in his letter of interest, all praise to God, he was able to take care of his mom from 81 to 101, and she passed away in 2019. That really kept him out of the loop for quite a while being there for her on a daily/weekly basis. But praise God he was able to, by the grace of God to get her from 81 to 101 and she passed away at 102.

Alderman Wood thanked Mr. Jett for being present. He asked Mr. Jett to tell him what he thought the bond projects meant for Hickory and the citizens of Hickory, the bond projects that they were doing right now.

Mr. Jett commented again he was not totally on top of it, but he keeps up with the news, basically Charlotte and Hickory. He would be willing to study it, focus and intently study it and see and be ready to make some educated decision, calculations on whatever it might be.

Alderwoman Williams commented he had spent a lot of time in Hickory and seemed to know it inside and out. She asked what he thought were the three major concerns they were dealing with now and potentially in the future.

Mr. Jett referred to his opening remarks. Even though he had that private school experience, and as Reverend Dr. Spearman said, he thought they do still have to acknowledge that they have somewhat of a genteel apartheid here in Hickory, where we again, have some associations across work or whatever, and we meet at the ball games, but we still really are basically living in each other's separate worlds. He had a vision that he would like to work on outside of just the brass tacks of Hickory to be able to do some work along that line trying to bring about that beloved vision. Dr. King's beloved community here in Hickory.

Alderman Seaver asked Mr. Jett if he liked to read.

Mr. Jett commented very much so.

Alderman Seaver advised they get a lot of required reading, so if he had any preferential reading, he would have to put that aside. He noted he had a lot of catching up to do one of these days. He asked what some ways were that he would communicate with his constituents like emails, messaging, meetings. What kind of ways?

Mr. Jett commented primarily emails. He has this idea also where he would like to meet and discuss with each Principal at each elementary and middle school. This was an idea he got from Mayor Wright. They had talked for the better part of an hour when they were getting ready to close the Ridgeview swimming pool. He started to come to the meeting to express his views. When he called he was not in, but he asked the Secretary to get back with him. He was surprised he did. They talked about an hour where he gave him background, his race relations evolutions and it made him realize how it was really a sound official positions for the Ridgeview pool to be closed. He mentioned something to him. He had a pen pal relationship with his Presbyterian Church with the black kid in the neighborhood. He said that meant a lot to him having this pen pal relationship over two or three years. He would like to also do something like that along that line. Discuss that with each Principal at each elementary and middle school, having a little white boy or a little black boy, either, at each school, a boy and a girl, different racial backgrounds or ethnic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds do a once-a-month pen pal relationship with them and then maybe go to the school twice during the school year to get with their little buddies and do a motivational inspirational speech. More or less reaching out to different schools.

Alderman Zagaroli asked Mr. Jett how he would best represent the members of Ward 4.

Mr. Jett advised he lives only a block away from the Ridgeview Library. He would make himself available each week in the conference room for an hour, or an hour and a half session just to be able to dialogue. He felt like having grown up there he had the passion and the dream to hopefully make Ridgeview as great as it possibly could be.

Mayor Guess commented relationships and communications were two very important aspects of the City Council. He asked what were the three most important steps that the City could take to enhance relationships and communications with their citizens.

Mr. Jett commented as mentioned earlier, he would be available on a daily basis to do emails, and communications. He would be willing to once a week to be at the Ridgeview Library, at the conference room, to have a person to person contact and interaction and he would like to again attend the different churches in the Ward to become familiar with different congregations.

Mayor Guess asked if there were any follow-up questions. He advised Mr. Jett there was a little over three minutes left on his time. He could take as much of that three minutes as he would like to tell them anything perhaps that they did not ask or something that he would like to tell them.

Mr. Jett commented he would like to get to the young people in the middle schools and elementary schools. A poem that came to him when a lady who graduated from Lenoir-Rhyne was leaving from Social Security going to Atlanta, she asked if he would do some of his poetry at this program. This poem came to him which he titled "Village Children", which was taken from it takes a village. He recited the poem. "Oh, look around at all the young faces. I mean really look not just casually. Do they appear well adjusted and content or their tell-tale signs of strife and misery. Being young can be such a challenging experience. Oftentimes carefree, but yet ever striving to grow. But unless we actually give them the nurturing, tell me how they truly supposed to do so. They are all God's precious and lovely flowers. However, many are wilting before they can bloom. And unless we reach out to tend and nurture them, can we not foresee the amble garden of bloom. So, let's make it our duty and responsibility to really reach out to them time and time again. Trusting and believing one day our loving efforts will bring forth beautiful blossoms of young women and men. Village Children." On closing he went back to what he was hoping to do with the churches. This poem was titled "Freedom Vistas". He recited the poem. "Imagine someday a place where sweet love reigns supreme and true brotherhood is not just a dream. Where you can if you only will all your aspirations and potential fulfill. Where wondrous peace is as pervasive as air and sharing and caring are natural affair. Well for God's sake let's tear down the walls of bigotry and bitterness of falsehood and fear of distrust and doubt allowing the rivers within of good and beauty to rush in and out. For once in all flee our self-inflicted cell. Come to know the assurance with your soul. It is well. So, for Christ's sake thanks to him we have the key, Now how much longer will it take before we set ourselves free. Freedom Vistas".

Mayor Guess and Council members thanked Mr. Jett.

Mayor Guess asked Ms. Anetia Ramseur Wright to the podium. He noted her last name just happened to be the last one in the alphabetical order. He explained the process that he had previously explained to all of the applicants. Council was allowing 15-minutes total for the interview process. She would be given the first three minutes for an introduction. She could take as much or as least amount of that three minutes as she would like. Council would start after that with questioning which would last 8 to 10-minutes. Then she would be allowed the last two minutes or so to be able to tell them anything that she did not get to tell them, or perhaps something she thought that Council would have asked that they did not ask. He asked her to

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state her name for the record, the address where she currently resided, what Ward she lived in, and how long she has lived there.

Ms. Anetia Ramseur Wright stated her name and advised she lived at 1035 South Center Street, Hickory, North Carolina. She had lived there since November 2022.

Mayor Guess asked what Ward that was in.

Ms. Wright advised Ward 4.

Mayor Guess noted there was a clock to keep the time and he would help her with that. He advised they would allow her up to three minutes for an introduction.

Ms. Wright commented it was her pleasure to be here and she appreciated the opportunity. She commented it was obvious to her that the City Council, Mayor, City Manager, Attorney, the Clerk, and all of Hickory's City employees had been hard at work. They had been diligent and consistent in the pursuit of the planning and business development as well as the housing and community development. To her, what had taken place in Hickory, North Carolina was nothing less than excellence. They had set the bar high and continued to maintain that standard. The new homes she saw on her way here, the new walkways, recreation, new businesses, new opportunities, bringing economic growth and attracting more people and more opportunities. A person would definitely have to live under a rock not to notice the growth that was taking place here. As a lifelong residence she had always been proud to call this City her home. She thanked everyone for their hard work. All the things that she loved about other cities and countries, she now has in Hickory. When she served in the United States Army in Frankfurt, Germany, she always admired the beautiful walkways all around the city, near the parks and the waterways, and how people were always meeting and greeting one another along the way to chat and to eat and of course, drink German beer. That was a beautiful thing and she had come to realize that was what community was about. She thanked them again for the City Walks and all the venues they now have. When she lived in Delaware, they did not have recreation facilities free and open to the public. She thought to herself, she could not believe it because where she was from they had several. When she lived in San Francisco she loved the many venues where people gathered to listen to music, to shop with vendors, and just enjoy themselves. They did not have that in her hometown, but they do now. She said all of that to say that she was excited, and she was proud. She did walking tours on Facebook a few summers ago to share with the world how proud she was of the City of Hickory. As she stated in her initial letter of interest to the Council, her desire to serve meant an opportunity to be engaged in the local politics on a citywide level. She realized the vacancy is for Ward 4, but she desired to represent the whole City and to be able to communicate the concerns and the needs of the citizens of Ward 4 and Hickory. To her, this was more than the opportunity to have a seat here. It was a chance to be engaged in the Council in the work that was being done for the City and the citizens. It was an opportunity to empower the residents to hear their concerns and ideas and keep them informed of the City's concerns and ideas. It was a chance to keep the line of communication open and clear.

Alderman Wood thanked Ms. Wright for being present and for her interest. He was curious what she thought Hickory's greatest asset was and what could they do to best leverage that asset.

Ms. Wright thought the best asset in Hickory was the citizens. She thought if they continue to serve them with the things that they were in need of, and provide the resources, and the City continues to have the standard of accountability. Keeping people happy, she thought that would do what it needs to do. She thought that people were happy when they were heard.

Alderman Williams commented she had given Council a really nice glimpse of her background where she had lived. She asked if she could delve a little deeper into her experiences that she had, that would bring some of the experiences and knowledge and just what she had learned along the way and how she could connect that to being on City Council.

Ms. Wright believed she was a great communicator. She worked really hard to get people to see eye to eye on the things that they were all concerned about. Her experience in the military, taught her how to be prepared and accountable. Her experience as a mother, and as a teacher, her experience working with young people for most of her life, including working with young people who had made mistakes and need a second chance. She believed all those experiences she could bring to the table in one way or another, especially when working with other adults and seeing the common good and what they were trying to do and how they could work it out.

Alderman Seaver thanked her for being present and for being last. He thanked her for her interest. There were a lot of folks here to hear about it. He thanked her for her accolades during her introduction. Among all the good stuff going on, there were some other things that may need to be looked at. He asked what she perceived could be the three most pressing concerns for the City.

Ms. Wright did not know what they could be, presently, because everything looked so good, but she had lived long enough to know things were not always what they seem, but she believed if the City kept on the path that it was on now, that it was a win/win situation. She referred to the parks and recreation because they have children, and they have elderly people who need outlets. Things to do and places to go. Continue on with the City beautification. Clean neighborhoods and providing family resources that people need.

Alderman Zagaroli asked how she would best represent the members of Ward 4.

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Ms. Wright believed again in communication. She believed in strong communication and strong involvement. She believed in developing relationships with people. Going to where they were meeting them where they were. Sitting down and talking with them about what their concerns were and trying to help them. She would define it almost like a social worker. A social worker gets to the point. Gets things done. Gets people what they need. Gets them the resources they need no matter what it is, and so that was how she would see her role in Ward 4.

Alderwoman Patton asked if she had a specific goal that she would like to accomplish during her tenure.

Ms. Wright commented a specific goal would be again for everyone to be able to have good communications for the citizens to know who the Council members were, what they looked like and what their vision was. She would like to see more cultural diversity in Ward 4 where young people could learn more about their history and their culture and eventually grow up to become good citizens because they know who they were, they know where they were from. They have this information which can empower them or will empower them.

Mayor Guess commented she had touched on communications and relationships and how important that was. He could tell her that was one of the things that was extremely important for Council members. He asked her what would be the three steps that she could take personally to enhance those relationships and the communications with their citizens.

Ms. Wright advised the three steps she would take should she be the representative of Ward 4, and actually what she already does was spend time with people. She spends time getting to know who they were and what they do, what their hopes and dreams were. Secondly, providing resources, just the basic important things that individuals need. It could be a number of things, especially now, with our economic situation with inflation and inequality and things of that nature. With her personally it comes back to talking things out, understanding the individual, seeing their point of view. She thought that would take them a long way.

Mayor Guess asked for any follow-up questions from Council. He advised Ms. Wright she had little over three minutes. She could take as much or as little of that three minutes as she would like to let Council know anything that she did not get to tell them.

Ms. Wright reiterated she grew up here in Hickory. She had seen a lot of things, experienced a lot of things. She honestly and truly loved her hometown and she always had. She grew up on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue across from Ridgeview School. She was not a person who lives in the past, but she honors the past and she thought it was important that they bring forth what was useful from the past, because that was their history, and the future was their hope. Should she be chosen to represent the citizens of Hickory in Ward 4, she would exude the same excellence in service and in work that she admired of Council. She would strive to build on the great things taking place here and always have a genuine concern in the plight of this community. She thanked Council.

Mayor Guess and Council members thanked Ms. Wright.

Mayor Guess advised that concluded their interviews with the applicants. For those applicants that were secluded, he wanted to tell everyone Council would be making a decision on an appointment at some time in the future. This person that they appoint would serve until the next general election. The next general election would be held in November of this year (2023). At that time the people, the citizens, would decide if the person that they appointed or if someone else was elected to not only the Ward 4 City Council, but for the other Council elections that were up for election this year as well.

Mayor Guess moved, seconded by Alderwoman Patton to adjourn the special meeting of the Hickory City Council. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Guess thanked each and every one for being present, particularly the applicants.

III. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

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Mayor

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City Clerk