

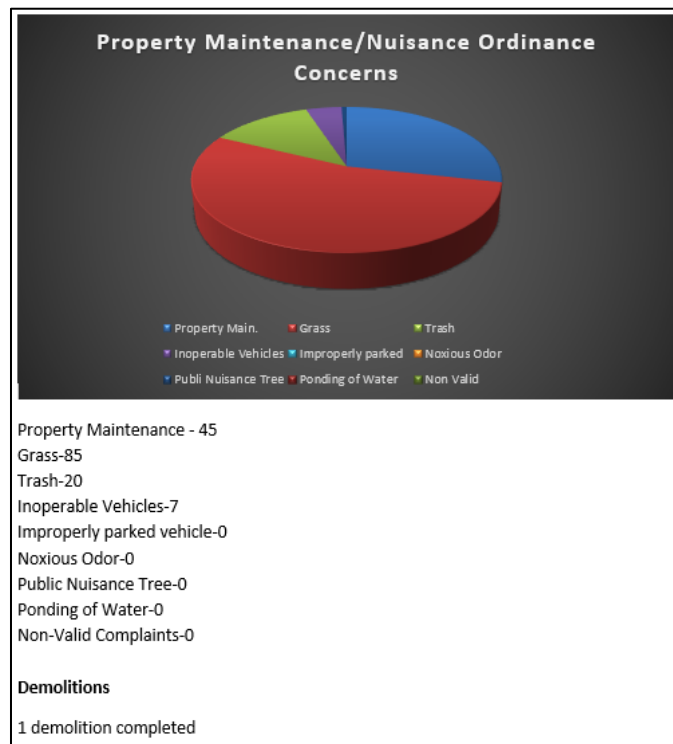
June 13, 2023 Council Meeting

A meeting of the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia was held on June 13, 2023 in Council Chambers, Municipal Building, at 7:00 PM with Mayor LC Jones presiding. Other Council Members present included Kathy Lawson, Aaron Rawls, Lawrence Mitchell and Tammy Pearson. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, City Attorney representative Steven Durbin, Finance Director Mandy McGhee, Assistant Finance Director Crystal Ferguson, Public Information Officer Kendall Davis, Fire Chief Dan Howell, and Deputy Police Chief Chad Rhoads.

Pledge to the flag and invocation were led by Council Member Lawson. Mayor Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that agendas could be found in the back of the room and on the City website.

Approve minutes from the April 11, 2023 Council Meeting, April 24, 2023 Neighborhood Meeting, April 25, 2023 Council Meeting, May 6, 2023 Council Retreat, and the May 9, 2023 Council Meeting – Council Member Lawson made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Council Member Pearson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

Hear an overview of the June 12 Druid Hills/Uptown neighborhood tour and meeting – City Manager Towarnicki summarized the neighborhood tour, the route they took and detailed some of the properties and concerns discussed. Towarnicki summarized the neighborhood meeting where approximately 15 residents attended and shared some of those resident concerns and how those would be addressed.



Conduct a public hearing for the purpose of receiving names of citizens interested in appointments for two 3-year terms ending June 30, 2026, and one unexpired 3-year term ending on June 30, 2024 on the Martinsville City School Board – Mayor Jones opened the public hearing. Leroy Hairston, Jr. spoke for Tony Jones who would like to be reconsidered for the

June 13, 2023 Council Meeting

school board. Stephanie Morris-Mills of 802 A Street Martinsville would like to be considered. Nekia Blackwell of 317 Forest Street put her name in for a school board vacancy. Emily Parker of 1225 Mulberry Road requested to be considered. Vice Mayor Rawls said that Cody Williams, 1223 Lanier Road would like to be considered while Council Member Pearson mentioned Heather Blankenbaker of 908 Hazelwood Lane who was also interested. Mayor Jones closed the public hearing. City Manager Towarnicki explained interviews should be handled prior to the June 27 closed session meeting. Council Member Lawson recommended interviews on Monday June 26 beginning at 5:30pm, allotting 30 minutes for each interview.

SCHOOL BOARD			
SCHOOL BOARD – The School Board is declared a body corporate. In its corporate capacity, it is vested with all the powers and charged with all the duties, obligations, and responsibilities upon school boards by law. It may sue, be sued, contract, be contracted with, and in accordance with the provisions of this title, purchase, take, hold, lease, and convey school property both real and personal. The School Board has the following powers and duties: 1) to make rules for the governance of the schools within its jurisdiction; 2) to determine the curriculum, methods of teaching, methods of administration and governance, and the length of the school term; 3) to employ and dismiss teachers upon the recommendation of the superintendent; 4) to suspend or expel pupils when necessary; 5) to establish such schools as are necessary in the judgement of the Board to so constitute a complete and efficient system; 6) to control and manage funds made available to the Board for the purpose of conducting free public schools; 7) examine all claims for payment and authorize payment; and 8) to submit annually to City Council a budget request.			
TERMS: The Board consists of five members serving three-year terms appointed by City Council. School Board members can serve a maximum of three 3-year consecutive terms.			
Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.			
CONTACT: Dr. Zeb Talley, Superintendent, 403-5820, 746 Indian Trail, Martinsville, VA 24112			
Name & Address	Initial Appointment	Term Expires	Full Term
Michael Williamson, 922 Vine Street	07/12/22	06/30/25	
Donna Dillard, 912 Forest Lake Dr. (reappt 6/23/20)	8/24/16	6/30/23	1
Tony Jones, 612 Third Street	6/23/20	6/30/23	
James Woods, 815 Clarke Road (Resigned 12/11/23)	07/12/22	6/30/24	
Ivonne Givens, 714 Indian Trail (reappt 6/23/21)	07/09/19	06/30/24	

Hear a presentation from Site Collaborative regarding Martinsville's Public Parks Improvements Plan – City Manager Towarnicki summarized the improvements plan that began using ARPA funds. He noted a RFP was issued, conducted interviews and selected Site Collaborative who has done a lot of work towards park improvements. Graham Smith, President of Site Collaborative presented a PowerPoint explaining the organization, their history with previous projects, and their plan for the City parks along with the projected progress outlines for each task. Site Collaborative would be engaged with Council regularly through the planning process and would like assigned liaisons and advocates within the city.



Martinsville
A CITY WITHOUT LIMITS

public parks plan
city council presentation

GRAHAM SMITH - PLA, ASLA
PRESIDENT + LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

 **SiTE** 
CONSULTING COLLABORATIVE
analysis • engagement • planning • design

JUNE 13, 2023

WHO ARE WE
WHAT HAVE WE DONE
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO
WHEN ARE WE DOING IT
WHAT HELP DO WE NEED

  outline

June 13, 2023 Council Meeting

- **SITE COLLABORATIVE**
 - Focus on the Piedmont of NC and VA (Raleigh, Central NC, and Southern Virginia (Danville)
 - Micro SWAM Virginia - #811387
 - Raleigh-based with Danville office
- Clients include National Park Service, NC State Parks, City of Danville (since 2010), IALR, City of Raleigh, Wake County, Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, etc.
- Currently have 6 projects under construction in Danville (+3 more by end of year):
 - Riverfront Park
 - White Mill Redevelopment
 - Third Avenue Splashpad + Doyle Thomas Park Splashpad
 - IALR Center for Manufacturing Advancement
 - IALR ATDM Facility

GRAHAM SMITH – LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
LAURA ABADOM – PARK PLANNER
MAURY BECKMANN – GIS ANALYST



- **Team:**
 - 1 Managing Principal (VT BLA 1995) – Virginia native + originally licensed in VA
 - 2 Principals (VT MLA; Rutgers BLA) – licensed in multiple states including VA
 - 1 Senior Associate (NC A+T BSLA)
 - 1 Planner (UVA MURP)
 - 3 Senior Designers (NCSU MLA; NC A+T BSLA; Wake Tech)
 - 1 Designer (VT BLA)
 - 1 Bookkeeper (part time)



River District
consulting

profile – site collaborative

- **RIVER DISTRICT CONSULTING GROUP (RDCG)**
 - Founded – 2014
 - Focus on the Piedmont of NC and VA (Southern Virginia, Triangle, Triad)
 - Woman-Owned
 - Chatham-based
 - Micro SWAM Virginia - #721733
- Recent experience with Site Collaborative in Danville on neighborhood park implementations
- Wide-ranging expertise in Community Engagement and Outreach
- **Team:**
 - 2 Managing Principals
 - 1 Staff Planner

HOLLIE ADAMS – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
RACHEL DEL CAMPO GATEWOOD – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



profile – river district consulting group



River District
consulting

ashland, norfolk, charlottesville (1998)



River District
consulting

aurora sports park (aurora colorado 2003)



River District
consulting

us national whitewater center (charlotte north carolina 2015)



River District
consulting

sassafras playground (raleigh, north carolina 2017)



River District
consulting

robertson millpond preserve (wendell, north carolina 2019)



River District
consulting

danville riverfront park (danville, virginia 2023)

Parks & Recreation Equity Plan

Danville, Virginia

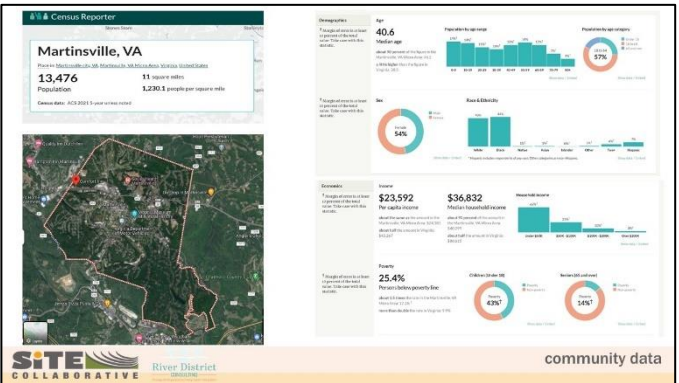
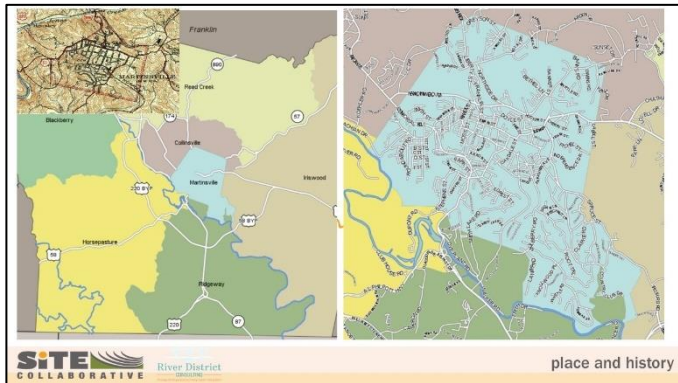
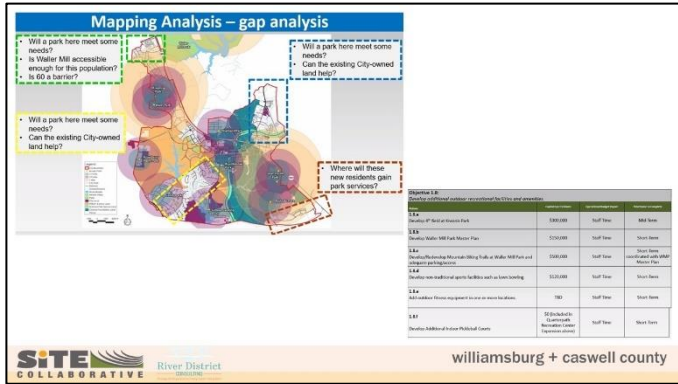
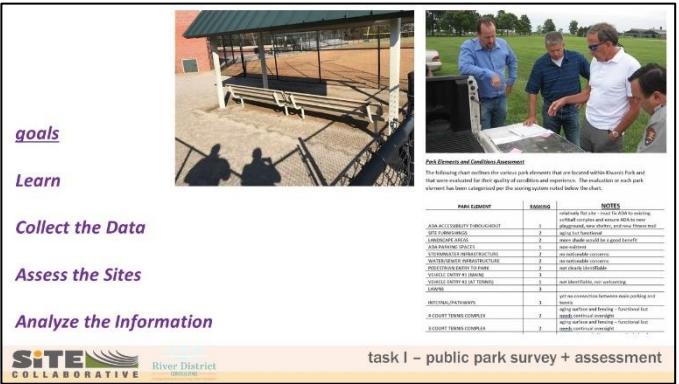
A Plan to help guide and direct the City on parks related spending, land acquisition, and programming to better meet the needs of citizens today and in the future.

January, 2020

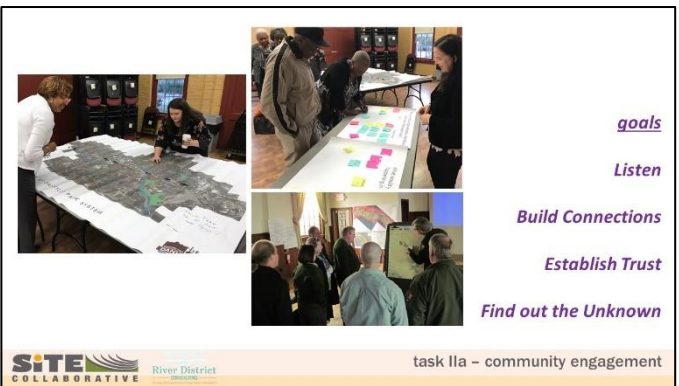
- All parks within city limits physically evaluated
- Specific focus on 17 neighborhood parks and 'left over' public spaces
- 6 community meetings – 5 spread around + 1 central
- 1 online survey
- Recommendations for improvements at each park, overall system cohesion improvements, and connectivity concerns
- Led to City hiring Community Engagement planner within Parks + Recreation

River District
Solutions

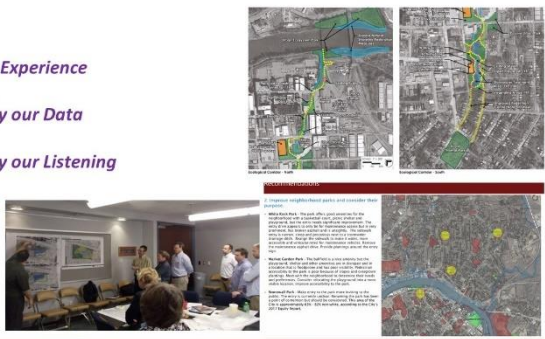
danville park equity plan



- Week of June 12th – Introduce project + gather information
Week of June 19th - Gather GIS files + build community map
Week of June 26th - Conduct review of community plans and documents
Week of July 3rd - Conduct kick-off meeting + windshield tour (+ client meeting in Martinsville)
Week of July 10th - Conduct site access and service gap analysis using GIS
Week of July 17th - Conduct physical park site assessments (+ client meeting in Martinsville)
Week of July 24th - Work on scoring matrix + assessment documentation
Week of July 31st – Wrap up work on scoring matrix + project documentation (+ client meeting)
Week of August 7th - Report out GIS and physical assessment findings (+ client meeting in Martinsville)
- goals
- Learn + Collect the Data + Assess the Sites + Analyze the Information*
-   task I – public park survey + assessment



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Week of August 14th - Prepare for community meetings <i>Week of August 14th - Launch possible online survey (alternate possible task)</i> Week of August 21st - Conduct community meetings (dates TBD) (in Martinsville) <i>Week of August 21st - Conduct possible specialized listening sessions (alternate possible task)</i> Week of August 28th - Conduct community meetings (dates TBD) (in Martinsville) Week of September 4th - Labor Day week + work on community meeting documentation <i>Week of September 4th - Conduct online community meeting (alternate possible task)</i> Week of September 11th - Work on community meeting documentation + report out (+ client meeting) Week of September 18th - Analyze community input data with Task I data (GIS + physical assessments) Week of September 25th - Analyze community input data with Task I data (GIS + physical assessments) Week of October 2nd - Report out blended data collected to this point – taking stock (+ client meeting) Goals Listen+ Build Connections + Establish Trust + Find out the Unknown SITE COLLABORATIVE River District CONSULTING task IIb – parks improvement plan creation	goals Lean on our Experience Be Guided by our Data Be Guided by our Listening Be Strategic Be Simple  SITE COLLABORATIVE River District CONSULTING task IIb – parks improvement plan creation
Week of October 9th - Using data collected, begin diagramming park improvements for each site Week of October 16th - Continue diagramming park improvements for each site Week of October 23rd - Review proposed park improvements for each site (+ client meeting) Week of October 30th - Refinement of proposed park improvements Week of November 6th - Continued refinement of proposed park improvements Week of November 13th - Preparation of draft opinions of probable costs (+ client meeting) Week of November 20th - Thanksgiving + refinement of draft opinions of probable costs/phases Week of November 27th - Review of preferred park improvements, costs, and phases (+ client meeting) Week of December 4th - Refinement of proposed improvements, costs, and prioritization Week of December 11th - Review of improvements, costs, and prioritization (+ client meeting) Week of December 18th - Begin to assemble all data, community input, proposed improvements, costs, prioritization, and funding sources into draft document – Public Parks Plan goals Lean on our Experience + Be Guided by our Data + Be Guided by our Listening + Be Strategic + Be Simple SITE COLLABORATIVE River District CONSULTING task IIb – parks improvement plan creation	Week of December 25th – Christmas Week of January 1st - New Years Day + continue to assemble draft document of Public Parks Plan Week of January 8th - Continue to assemble draft document of Public Parks Plan Week of January 15th - Conduct Public Parks Plan review of draft document (+ client meeting) Week of January 22nd - Refine draft document Week of January 29th - Review refined draft document (+ client meeting) Week of February 5th - Refine draft document Week of February 12th - City Council presentation of Public Parks Plan Week of February 19th - Prepare final document with any final revisions requested Week of February 26th - Contract ends and all documents, data, final PDFs provided to City goals Lean on our Experience + Be Guided by our Data + Be Guided by our Listening + Be Strategic + Be Simple SITE COLLABORATIVE River District CONSULTING task IIb – parks improvement plan creation
- TASK I – PUBLIC PARK SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT - now through early august - nominate community liaisons/advocates - talk it up – strong parks strengthen communities - TASK IIa – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - early august through early october 6 meetings around the City – help spread the word - support community liaisons/advocates - talk it up – being heard matters - TASK IIb – PUBLIC PARKS PLAN CREATION - mid-october through end of February - ask questions – how, where, why, what, when - talk it up – how can we (collectively) make this happen SITE COLLABORATIVE River District CONSULTING help needed	 thank you!!! SITE COLLABORATIVE River District CONSULTING

Consider approval of a resolution supporting an Industrial Revitalization Fund application to Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for the development project at One Ellsworth – City Manager Towarnicki said the City was made aware of an opportunity and once they received the criteria, one project stood out to be eligible which is the BB&T project. Towarnicki summarized the application and potential funds available for the One Ellsworth project. The application is due prior to the second Council meeting this month and a resolution is required to move forward with the application. If the award is made, a performance agreement will be implemented and brought back to Council for review and approval. Staff recommends Council approve the resolution so the application can move forward. Vice Mayor Rawls made a motion to approve the resolution. Council Member Lawson seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor.

<i>Council Members</i> LC Jones, Mayor Aaron Rawls, Vice-Mayor Kathy Lawson Lawrence Mitchell Tammy Pearson	 Martinsville A CITY WITHOUT LIMITS	<i>City Manager</i> Leon E. Towarnicki <i>Clerk of Council</i> Karen Roberts
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RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING AND AUTHORIZATING APPLICATION FOR UP TO \$5,000,000 IN FUNDING TO VIRGINIA DHCD UNDER THE FY2024 INDUSTRIAL REVITALIZATION FUND (IRF) PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development has indicated funds up to \$10 million are available for eligible projects, administered through the Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF) program with up to \$5,000,000 as a maximum award per project with a 1:1 match; and

WHEREAS, the current redevelopment project underway at the former BB&T building uptown now known as One Ellsworth has been deemed to be an eligible project, and

WHEREAS, the required match of up to \$5,000,000 will be provided by the development team and will also be expended on this project - it is projected that the adaptive reuse project will provide permanent jobs for 40 employees (determined through calculations of employment in commercial spaces) and will also support 36 construction jobs during an 18-month period; and

WHEREAS the redevelopment project will create 68 new residential apartment units and several commercial spaces for lease, providing significant ancillary benefits due to increased economic activity from an infusion of more residents to the Uptown area;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Martinsville wishes to apply for up to \$5,000,000 of Industrial Revitalization Funds for One Ellsworth: Mixed-Use Adaptive Reuse in Uptown for generating a mixed-use complex with housing and commercial spaces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Leon Towarnicki, City Manager, is hereby authorized to sign and submit appropriate documents for the submittal of this Industrial Revitalization Fund proposal.

Attest:

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council
June 13, 2023
Date Adopted

55 West Church Street, P. O. Box 1112, Martinsville, VA 24114-1112 276-403-5180 Fax: 276-403-5280
www.martinsville-va.gov

Consider approval of amended Budget Ordinance 2023-U-1 on second reading – City Manager Towarnicki presented a PowerPoint, summarizing the budget process along with key points, staff recommendations and action recommended for tonight’s meeting. Vice Mayor Rawls asked Towarnicki to elaborate on the need for a proposed water/sewer increase. Staff requests that Council (1) approve the amended budget ordinance then (2) adopt the budget ordinance. Rawls said he would like to see the budget process started in January going forward. Towarnicki explained that staff begins the budget process with the city audit, usually in December and City staff is included around January and taken to Council around April.

FY24 Budget Public Hearing Summary TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2024 TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2024	Summary FY 24 Budget was presented at Council's April 25, 2023 meeting. No action taken at that meeting. Budget key points as presented: Kept current real estate tax rate at \$1.04/\$100. Due to reassessments and increased values, an estimated increase in real estate tax revenue of approx. \$1.2 M was included in the budget Proposed 8% electric rate increase Reduced school funding of \$750,000 over the requested \$6,167,637 5% budget reduction for most City departments Level funding for outside agencies except for certain agencies (911, DSS) Follows state lead on COLA for employees & constituitonals @ 7%. Still undecided
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Summary

One personnel addition – law clerk for Circuit Court (confirmed to be a one year position); hiring freeze in other areas.

A required public hearing was held at Council's May 9 meeting due to increased real estate tax assessments and the resulting increase in the effective tax rate.

Budget work session was held on May 10 with City Schools and to review capital. A second session was held on May 16 with outside agencies (911, DSS, Library) followed by a review of City constitutional and departmental budgets. It was noted between the time of the initial budget presentation on April 25 and May 16, it was concluded both a water and sewer rate increase were needed, and a recommended \$3 increase for each was discussed. A third work session was held on May 17 to discuss the previous sessions and answer questions. Alternate budget recommendations were made by Vice Mayor Rawls, a fourth work session was scheduled for Monday, May 22, and staff was instructed to develop an alternate budget that reduced the real estate tax rate by \$0.05/\$100, and eliminated the use of ARPA funds.

Budget Work Session Revisions From 5/17 Work Session

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2023 6 PM

From 5/17/23 Work Session

- Eliminate Use of ARPA Funds \$1,194,494
- Reduce real estate tax by \$0.05/\$100 from current \$1.04/\$100 to \$0.99/\$100, for a net effect of reducing real estate tax revenue by approximately \$350,000.
- Total reduction of \$1,544,494

Staff Recommendations

Meals Tax Transfer	\$300,000	\$300,000
Refuse Fund Transfer	\$300,000	\$600,000
Water Fund Transfer	\$250,000	\$850,000
Increase Bus License Revenue	\$200,000	\$1,050,000
Increase HB599	\$ 43,216	\$1,093,216
Increase Transport Revenue	\$ 87,400	\$1,180,616
Court Reporter Revenue	\$ 10,000	\$1,190,616
Jail/Jail Annex Food Red	\$ 40,000	\$1,230,616

Staff Recommendations

Minet Capital Reduction	\$100,000	\$1,330,616
Lodging Tax Increase	\$20,000	\$1,350,616
Delay Asst. CM Pos 6 months	\$68,213	\$1,418,829
E-time software 1st year MA	\$35,000	\$1,453,829
Delay CD Director Pos 6 mos	\$65,928	\$1,519,757
Increase use of GF UFB	\$24,737	\$1,544,494

Recommended Actions Tonight

Conduct Public Hearing and accept comments.

Council decides what to leave in the budget, remove, change, modify, etc. A motion, second, and vote can be held on individual issues, or collectively a group of issues.

If Council decides to transfer funds from the Meals Tax Fund, a motion, second, and vote will be appropriate since this will be a deviation from a policy previously established by Council.

Once all the budget changes approved, it will be necessary for Council to approve the FY24 budget ordinance (as modified by any such changes), with motion, second, and roll call vote.

Final adoption and second reading is scheduled for Tuesday, June 13.

Additional Budget Adjustments

From Council meeting & budget public hearing on 5/23, Council requested additional reductions of approximately \$270,000 to restore funding for approximate costs of 2 police officers (\$145K) and 2 teachers (\$125K). Net effect is to reduce the original 5% PD reduction by \$145K and reduce the original school reduction of \$750K by \$125K.

Adjustments - move cost associated with law clerk to ARPA (\$85K), cigarette tax increase to \$0.40/pack (\$25K), ambulance revenue (\$25K), slight adjustment in use of fund balance, and minor reductions in 26 other line items scattered throughout the general fund budget.

Capital

Capital review committee met on 6/6/23 to review capital based on available funding and arrived at decisions on a number of items. \$1,133,938 is available for capital after transfer and debt service obligations. Proposed capital includes 3 items covered through multi-year funding; ambulance, knuckleboom truck, 2 police cars & cameras, skid-steer loader shared with other departments; grant match for new senior services van, garage door replacement, and several other smaller items.

Council Member Lawson made a motion to amend Ordinance 2023-U-1 to conform to the changes noted. Vice Mayor Rawls seconded the motion with all Council Members voting in favor. Lawson made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2023-U-1 as amended on second reading. Rawls seconded the motion. Lawson said the budget is necessary, she knew it would be a painful budget year and she thanked Council and staff for working through the details. Towarnicki thanked the department heads and the ladies in the Finance Department for their work. The

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ordinance was adopted on second reading with the following roll call vote: Council Member Pearson, aye; Council Member Mitchell, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Council Member Lawson, aye; and Vice Mayor Rawls; aye.

City of Martinsville
ORDINANCE NO. 2023-U-1
The Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Martinsville, Virginia, in regular Session assembled June 13, 2023, that the following sums of money be and hereby are appropriated – by specific Fund – for the City’s fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, from the following Fund sources of estimated revenue:

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF BUDGET ESTIMATES
2023-2024

FUND	PROJECTED REVENUES	BUDGETED EXPENDITURES	CHANGES FUND BALANCE
General	\$34,955,302	\$37,500,868	(\$2,545,566)
Meals Tax	\$3,072,721	\$3,072,721	\$0
Capital Reserve	\$1,545,318	\$1,545,318	\$0
Refuse	\$2,081,200	\$2,709,704	(\$628,504)
Telecom	\$2,023,651	\$2,023,651	\$0
Water	\$4,143,760	\$4,820,438	(\$676,678)
Sewer	\$4,854,012	\$7,119,720	(\$2,265,708)
Electric	\$23,539,063	\$23,293,362	\$245,701
CDBG	\$2,700	\$172	\$2,528
Cafeteria*	\$1,700,641	\$2,069,368	(\$368,727)
School Operating*	\$25,133,772	\$25,133,772	\$0
TOTALS:	\$103,052,140	\$109,289,094	(\$6,236,954)

*Cafeteria and School Operating Funds information provided by School Personnel.

Tax Rates:

Real Estate: \$0.99/\$100 assessed value (reduced from \$1.04/\$100)
Personal Property: \$2.30 per \$100 assessed value (unchanged)
Machinery/Tools: \$1.85 per \$100 assessed value (unchanged)
Cigarette Tax: *\$0.40 per pack – (increased from \$0.30/pack)
Lodging Tax: *7% of total lodging bill (increased from 2%)

Electric Rate:
Average 8% increase

Water & Sewer Rates:
Increase in monthly rates of \$3 each

- Cigarette & Lodging tax increase effective September 1, 2023, by separate ordinance

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED by said Council that this Ordinance shall be effective on and after July 1, 2023.

Attest:

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

Date Adopted

Date Effective

Business from the Floor – James Coleman, Martinsville resident said it’s nice to be at a meeting where no one is mad at him about zoning issues. He represents a firm over 100 years old where the money first started in tobacco, then farming. Coleman provided history on Lanier Farms, the Druid Hills development, the Rives Brown family involvement in that and how Rives Brown, Jr. gifted a foot of land to Julian Hurst, Developer. Coleman has been around 55 years and has worked with almost every City Manager. Coleman said he can’t give Leon a foot of Martinsville, but he can tell him how much he appreciates all that City Manager Towarnicki has done over the years and no one has been as strong, effective and as low-key of a leader as Towarnicki has. When Towarnicki retires, the amount of knowledge and the wealth of information goes out the door with him. Coleman gifted Towarnicki with a 150-year old yard-stick.

Dru Rothrock, 604 Mulberry Road has been a Martinsville resident for 70 years. He did not realize that reversion was a topic as far back as 1950 when the first committee was formed. In 1981 the Martinsville-Henry County Merger Study Committee was created and from 2002 to 2004 the Martinsville-Henry County Sub-Committee of Joint School Boards was formed. City Council reversion studies began in 2012 to 2013 and were done again in 2018 to 2019. Both times, consultants were hired who all concurred that city expenses would increase more than

June 13, 2023 Council Meeting

city revenue, resulting in the pursuit of savings by cutting services or consolidating services with the County. On December 10, 2019 Council voted for reversion to eliminate the financial stress on the City with the plan to eliminate double constitutional offices and combine schools with the County. The community would have the opportunity to provide children the best education but Council Members Pearson, Rawls and Jones and the Commissioner of Revenue Ruth Easley campaigned firmly against reversion. None of the anti-reversion men or women cited specifically why or how those previous studies were wrong. On January 9, 2023 Council voted to cancel reversion and end years of reversion efforts. There is a huge disconnect between what Rawls, Pearson, Jones and Easley said compared to the budget that has been approved. Average real estate taxes will go up about 25%. Electricity rates will go up 8% in July and again in January 2024. Lodging rate will increase from 2% to 7%. City employee raises will be 5% instead of 7%. In his opinion, these council members who cancelled reversion did a real disservice to the community by voting to kill reversion without citing the specific reasons why their financial forecast for the future differ from the City and County studies for the past 70 years. Now the city is facing a budget crisis which is exactly what the consultants had predicted for years. The citizens of Martinsville can look forward to higher taxes or cuts in services for years to come.

Ural Harris, 217 Stuart Street questioned some of the statements from the previous Council meeting, specifically that the 2006 tax increase was the largest in city history. The current tax rate is higher than the state plus the increase in cigarette and lodging tax would be the biggest increase in history for the City. Harris questioned the reimbursement on the number of school aged children who attend Martinsville schools and how Council can say it will cost more money this coming year.

Leroy Hairston, Jr of 109 Terry Street says he leaves here tonight with mixed emotions after observing Council's actions. Everything is going up in price, he is saddened how citizens are being treated and the city is not progressing because of so much evil in their heads. Citizens and Council Members need to work together or they'll fall like fools.

Mike Sanguedolce of 708 Starling Avenue provided a brief summary of the Transportation Safety Committee and updates on what they are working on. There has been talk about Cleveland Avenue and Brown Street and they plan to talk to the residents regarding possibly changing the flow of traffic and using an empty lot as a pickup location for the school. Unfortunately, there is no funding in the school budget for paving this next year. The Committee has had bushes trimmed and signs installed and are making progress throughout the City. The intersection at Starling Avenue and Church Street was discussed and the bushes are still obstructing the view of traffic when turning.

Jennifer Bowles, 1670 Roundabout Road shared details about a downed tree on her road that is causing a traffic hazard. Bowles also expressed her concern about being removed from the West Piedmont Planning District Board of Commissioners illegally and without cause.

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Bowles read an email that was sent to Council Members, the City Manager and the Director of the West Piedmont Planning District on May 25, 2023 that stated “Honorable Mayor Jones and members of Council: Your attempted removal of me from the West Piedmont Planning District Commission board is illegal. The bylaws of the WPPDC state that members may be removed “for cause” by City Council as the appointing body. Vice Mayor Rawls’ motion on April 11 gave no reason whatsoever for my removal — which was therefore clearly without cause. The requirement for removal with cause qualifies and limits Council’s authority to remove its appointees, and makes that authority subject to Code of Virginia section 24.2–234, requiring Council to petition the circuit court for removal. Valid reasons for removal are set out in Code of Virginia section 24.2–233 and include such things as conviction of a crime, inability to serve, or neglect of duty. These allegations have to be proven in court. Simply passing a motion to remove someone is not in that list. Neither is personal dislike or political disagreement. While I respect the Council’s ability to appoint and remove public officials, that power is not unlimited. If you wish to remove me from the WPPDC, please do so for a valid and provable reason, and do so in compliance with Virginia law. Until and unless you are able to comply with the law, I will continue to attend and participate in the WPPDC meetings as a duly appointed member representing Martinsville.” Bowles continued, stating that Vice Mayor Rawls’ motion on April 11 to remove her from the board was without cause. Bowles stated that she will continue to attend and participate in the meetings as a dully appointed member. Bowles is not sure why she was removed and replaced when there were well over 30 vacancies on various boards for Joe Martin to serve on. Bowles said she has served on this board previously for 6 years as a Council Member. Vice Mayor Rawls stated that he wants someone to serve who is experienced and qualified, which he feels that Bowles is not. Bowles and Rawls debated the topic and Bowles requested a written response to her questions.

Mayor Jones asked Deputy Police Chif Chad Rhoads about the dog barking ordinance. Rhoads explained the ordinance and action that can be taken.

Comments by City Council – Council Member Mitchell had the opportunity to attend the Martinsville High School graduation, stating that it was moving to see the parents and families celebrating the students and thanked the City school system. Council Member Pearson thanked those residents who expressed interest in serving on the school board. It was nice to see a good crowd at the Druid Hills neighborhood meeting; Council appreciates hearing resident voices. In regards to the budget, she would like to start that process earlier with more hands on by Council Members. Council Member Lawson asked City Manager Towarnicki if they can get statistics on Cleveland Avenue traffic and car riders in the evening that is causing the congestion. Lawson shared that the School board owns a lot between the gym and Truist Bank and the opportunity to make that lot usable for pickup/parking/overflow. Lawson reminded citizens that Wednesday is Flag Day and that there will be a Juneteenth celebration on Saturday at Baldwin Park hosted by FAHI. The Mustangs played a fabulous game last night and will play again this Friday.

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Lawson thanked everyone for the diligent work that went into the budget. Vice Mayor Rawls shared that there will be a Flag Day ceremony at the City Municipal Building at 1:00pm. He is thankful for the amount of interest for the school board. Rawls will be a guest tomorrow on the Charles Roark show so he can talk about reversion and why Council made the decision to cancel that and invited residents to call in with questions. Rawls asked for confirmation that reversion would not be worth it if schools did not consolidate, Towarnicki and Lawson said it was not. Rawls said he has not seen any figures to support reversion. Mayor Jones thanked residents and especially all that put in for school board and he thanked those who shared views on reversion. When Jones decided to run for council, he knew it would be an uphill battle. Jones said higher taxes are something that must be done for a brighter future for Martinsville. Rules are changed behind closed doors. Jones encouraged residents to keep coming forward with suggestions.

Comments by City Manager – City Manager Towarnicki said the city has already looked at the vacant avenue on Cleveland Avenue but the middle school is using that space to store materials for roof repairs; they are looking to do something with that lot once the repairs are complete. There are a lot of projects going on and that's incredible for a small community, starting with the remodeling of the Henry Hotel and Chief Tassel project, the battery storage project, the solar project, the Aaron Mills project, the BB&T building, and the Armory. He has received three very good proposals for the Armory property that will be brought to Council in the near future along with even more projects and the proposed park upgrades. He hopes residents and Council Members realize the amount of work that goes into getting these projects started.

Kendall Davis, Public Information Officer spoke briefly about the Grand Slam Fest on Monday June 19 at Hooker Field beginning at 4:30pm and invited Martinsville and Henry County citizens for foosball, inflatables, cornhole, and entertainment by Pirates of the Piedmont. There will be door prizes and the opportunity to meet City employees and then stay for the game. City employees get in free for the game.

Mitchell asked why the fire dept was at the Paradise Inn and if Towarnicki has a timetable on the demolition of that building. Towarnicki said the contract was awarded weeks ago and he expects that to begin soon. He pointed out that the markings on the ground are probably locations for underground utilities to prepare for the demolition.

There being no further business, Council Member Lawson made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

Karen Roberts, Clerk of Council

LC Jones, Mayor