

April 15, 2025

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on April 15, 2025, at 7:54 p.m. in City Council Conference Room located on the Fourth Floor of the Municipal Building. The following Council Members present were: Vice Mayor James B. Buckner, L.G. "Larry" Campbell Jr., Bryant Hood, Barry P. Mayo, Dr. Gary P. Miller, J. Lee Vogler, Jr., and Madison J.R. Whittle (7). Mayor Alonzo L. Jones and Sherman M. Saunders were absent. (2)

Staff Members present were: Deputy City Manager Earl B. Reynolds Jr., City Attorney W. Clarke Whitfield, Jr., and City Clerk Susan M. DeMasi. City Manager Ken F. Larking was absent.

Vice Mayor Buckner presided.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Vice Mayor Buckner noted following a meeting of the Committee on Appointments, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority:	Appoint: Lucius Chandler
Danville Development Authority:	Appoint: current IDA Members: Kristen Barker Jim Bebeau John Laramore Philip Hall Robbie Woodall Russell Reynolds T. Neal Morris

There were no objections to the recommendations and Council agreed to put this on an upcoming business agenda.

CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO COUNCIL'S RULES OF PROCEDURE

City Attorney Clarke Whitfield noted that Council needed to make changes to their Rules of Procedure. They need to change their Inaugural meeting since the elections were moved to November and the Inaugural meeting needs to be moved to January. Another item was changing the order of two items on the agenda, moving Old Business and Consent Agenda. Mr. Whitfield noted staff was proposing a rule that says that Council can only make a motion to add something to the agenda during the regular meeting and not during comments. Also, a lot of boards and commissions, and councils, have a regular item on the agenda, the first item, to approve the agenda and make any additions or deletions at that time. Mr. Whitfield questioned Council if that was something they wanted to do.

Vice Mayor Buckner stated if a Council Member had something they wanted to add to the agenda, they would do it at the beginning of the meeting and it becomes the last New Business item on the agenda. Mr. Whitfield noted that the Council Member would make a motion to add an item to the agenda, to the end of New Business, it would have to be seconded and voted on.

April 15, 2025

Mr. Vogler noted the only thing that was changing was instead of a council member proposing an item during closing comments, he brings it up at the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Vogler stated it was not making it harder to put on, it would take a motion and a second to put it on the agenda, and then a vote to consider the item.

Mr. Whitfield noted he was proposing that there be a standing agenda item, as the first agenda item, to approve the agenda, and to make any changes to add or take off any item. Mr. Whittle questioned how long has Council been doing it the way they were doing it, and just because he fired a few off, it should be left as it was. Mr. Whitfield stated there were a few changes that had to be made, including the organizational meeting and switching the order of the items on the agenda. Another item was, there have been situations in the past where people have had signs or flags and they block the camera; staff wants to make sure they prohibit that during a meeting. They can have signs, but cannot hold them up and block the view of other people or the cameras.

Dr. Miller stated at all the conferences he has attended, they always start with, was there anything that needed to be added to the agenda; they have to get a vote of the majority of members to get something on the agenda. The last section was just the comment section, telling citizens what was going on in the community, that was not where they do business, it should be up front during the business session. Dr. Miller noted he has not seen that happen anywhere else.

Vice Mayor Buckner asked if this should be put on a business meeting, and Mr. Vogler noted were they going to vote on all of them at once or separately. Mr. Whitfield noted all the changes were red-lined in the agenda. Mr. Whittle asked that it be pushed out to the next meeting. Mr. Whitfield noted that can be done, staff can bring this back and do a straw poll for each change. Vice Mayor Buckner noted this will be moved to another work session and staff can list each change for consideration.

PRESENTATION OF SATELLITE VISITOR CENTER AT CAESARS VIRGINIA

Director of Economic Development and Tourism, Corrie Bobe, noted staff wanted to give an update on the Visitor Center operations and an upcoming opportunity to expand into a satellite location. The City added a tourism program about three and half years ago, and Lisa Meriweather and the Visit SoSi team have built a very strong program. They now have a Tourism Sales Coordinator, staff assumed the Visitor Center operations a few years ago, and there were 10 part-time travel counselors.

Lisa Meriweather and Lisa Greer have done a great job of putting the travel counselors through rigorous training to ensure they understand customer service, the assets of the region and how to communicate with the traveling public when they come through. They will not only know what to do while they were here, but to encourage them to come back again. The engagement and number of visits have increased, as well as the average time spent at the Visitor Center. In 2024, of the 57,000 that came into the parking lot, the travel counselors spoke to and offered information to nearly 19,000.

Peak hours were midday, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with the largest volume of traffic on the weekends. The vacation season, from May until the beginning of September sees the largest volume of traffic. The top states that visit were Virginia and North Carolina, but they have had people from Alaska, Canada, and Washinton also stop. They collect information on what tourists were interested in, what they would want to see, and the top two were History, and Arts & Culture; Caesars was only 4%. Ms. Bobe noted the visitor center was off the expressway and was not on a direct path to Caesars; their customers were typically coming for a specific purpose which was

April 15, 2025

to spend money at the resort. Ms. Bobe reviewed the demographic overview of those coming into the visitor center, noting their software also helps track the visitor's origin, mostly from Maryland down to Florida, which very much aligns with the information outlined in the Tourism Master Plan from a few years ago.

Ms. Bobe reviewed the Visitor Center updates that were happening now, in real time. The old set of offices in the back for city staff was now being opened up to a larger room with a secondary entrance and exit. They can host some of their programming in that space and better utilize the building. They want their travel counselors and visitor center manager to be out in front with people, not in back. They removed the fencing from around the patio, limited the vegetation and pushed it out to expand the footprint of the patio. They will also connect the walkway fully around the building. Phase II would relocate the visitor center operations temporarily to a training room while the main retail space is under construction.

Ms. Bobe noted regarding Caesars, staff felt they were missing a major market given the traffic patterns; those visitors were specifically coming into the City to go to Caesars. How do they attract the two million visitors anticipated going through their doors this year; staff needed to go and meet them where they were. The development agreement included an opportunity for the City to have some form of presence on site for visitor center tourism operations. They were offered a space located near the hotel tower. As people check in and check out, staff would have direct access to those people staying in the hotel. Caesars has proposed a monthly lease rate of \$2,000; staff has asked for the most flexibility, as it will be a trial for the City. Caesars agreed to a month-to-month lease which offers the most flexibility for their operations. The \$2,000 per month includes utilities, maintenance, cleaning, parking for the travel counselor and trash pickup. They will also oversee any of the necessary improvements to upfit the space for the City's operations, including installation of kiosks. The City was able to negotiate some marketing opportunities which included placement in all the resorts digital signage rotations; that could be tourism information or directional signage to the visitor center itself. Room collaterals, or in-room tourism materials will allow the City to put in collateral they would like the visitors to see. Also, when walking into a hotel room, there was a television that welcomes the visitor, showcasing all the amenities within that hotel or resort; Caesars has agreed to allow the City to be part of that digital marketing. On a case-by-case basis, the City has to get permission from event holders and the Caesars leadership team, as concerts and conferences take place, the City will have the opportunity to sell branded merchandise or have a travel counselor present to assist with information about the community. They have existing alcoves or vendor windows in the conference and event area, so they will allow the City to use one of those vacant spaces.

Ms. Bobe noted the satellite center will operate very much like the existing visitor center, seven days a week, only closed at Christmas, Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. They were looking at later hours to start with, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with the understanding on weekends they may have to adjust as there was more traffic in the facility. They believe one part-time travel counselor was needed per shift and they will use their current travel counselors to fill this need. They will have collateral to provide visitors including pamphlets and travel guides on what to do and see in Danville and Pittsylvania County. They will have branded merchandise for Danville and Visit SoSi for purchase and will be trying out new digital kiosks; they were interactive kiosks that connect directly with the Visit SoSi website. They were also looking at a digital wall display. Staff wanted to bring this to Council tonight to share what they have negotiated with Caesars and get Council's feedback on how they should move forward. If Council was in favor of this, staff will seek their approval for the lease and additional budget to upfit the space; it was mostly FFE, the kiosks and merchandise holders. Dr. Miller noted he thought it was a great idea; he could see people coming to stay from out of town to visit Caesars, they weren't going to stay on the casino floor the whole

April 15, 2025

time; they were going to look for something to do. This was a good way to direct them to downtown or anywhere in the City; Mr. Vogler noted his agreement.

Council agreed to put this on an upcoming agenda.

CONSIDERATION OF REPEALING AND REORDAINING CHAPTER 23.1 ENTITLED “NOISE” OF THE DANVILLE CITY CODE

Assistant City Attorney Ryan Dodson noted after some feedback from members of the public, staff looked at the noise ordinance, which had not been updated in fifteen years. There were several substantive changes made, based off feedback related to an incident in the City, regarding ATVs and dirt bikes. That was the main change; staff amended the definition of motor vehicle to include not just cars, but also some of the smaller motor vehicles. Did the noise harass people within their private home; if they were sitting outside, that was one thing, or was it heard inside the house on private property. Chief of Police Chris Wiles noted when it was originally written, it focused on the state motor vehicle code, such as loud exhaust, or vehicles being operated on the highway. It didn't address dirt bikes, or somebody that had a garage at their house that was off a city street, on their residential property but were revving an engine repeatedly, or riding a dirt bike around the yard. The motor vehicle section of the noise ordinance didn't apply to that, it only applied to when it was being operated on the street.

Mr. Dodson noted there were a few minor changes related to air cannons scaring birds, and they also added quiet zones, and squealing tires if done on purpose. They adjusted the time limit for noisy trash delivery by one hour, and deleted some definitions not used in the Code. The goal was to make the Chapter a little bit leaner, easier to read and more effective at policing what was needed as far as disruptive noises within homes and on private property.

Chief Wiles noted Council had received calls about music, specifically that was emanating from a location such as 2 Witches, or Buffalo Wild Wings, in the past, with people in the community complaining. There was an exemption between 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm in most of those commercial type areas. The other item Council has probably had complaints about was zones with instead of 10:00 p.m. being the cutoff it was 12:00. That was in the warehouse districts in the downtown area. Mr. Vogler noted he hoped they didn't become too restrictive, Danville was growing, and hoped they started seeing places stay open later. Chief Wiles noted they were not changing that, he just wanted to bring that up as it was an issue that Council had received calls about, to see if there was an interest in looking at that.

Council agreed to put this on an upcoming business agenda.

CLOSED MEETING

At 8:37 p.m., Council Member Vogler **moved** that this meeting of the City Council of the City of Danville, Virginia be recessed and that Council immediately reconvene in a Closed Meeting for the following purposes: discussion or consideration of the acquisition or disposition of real property for a public purpose where discussion in an open meeting would adversely impact the bargaining position of the City as permitted by Subsection (A)(3) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended and more specifically to consider discussion regarding the sale and/or potential purchase of a specific parcel of property for use by the City of Danville and prospective industrial, commercial, and mixed use projects looking to locate to the City, and an Economic Development discussion and update concerning a prospective business or industry where no previous announcement has been made and/or the expansion of an existing business

April 15, 2025

or industry where no previous announcement has been made as permitted by Subsection (A)(5) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended and more specifically to consider an update on multiple prospective commercial, mixed use, hospitality, and industrial projects considering locating within the City and/or within the region in cooperation with the City's regional partners.

The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Mayo and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 7-0-2
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Mayo, Miller,
Vogler and Whittle (7)
NAY: None (0)
ABSENT: Jones, Saunders (2)

Upon unanimous vote at 8:57 p.m., Council reconvened in open session and Council Member Vogler **moved** for adoption of the following Resolution:

CERTIFICATE OF CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Council convened in Closed Meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, requires a Certification by the Council that such Closed Meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia Law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each Member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements of Virginia Law under Section 2.2-3711 were heard, discussed or considered, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered by the Committee.

The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Mayo and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 7-0-2
AYE: Buckner, Campbell, Hood, Mayo, Miller,
Vogler and Whittle (7)
NAY: None (0)
ABSENT: Jones, Saunders (2)

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:57 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK