

MINUTES

CITY OF NEW ROADS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

February 2, 2021

The New Roads City Council met in regular session at 5:30 o'clock P.M. Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at the City Hall in New Roads, Louisiana. Mayor Cornell Dukes called the meeting to order. A roll call resulted as follows:

PRESENT: Vernell Davis, Kurt Kellerman, Joy Nelson, Theron Smith and Kirk White

ABSENT: None

Notice of this meeting was duly exercised and mailed per bylaws:

Public comments on agenda items

There were no public comments.

Adoption of Minutes of Regular Council Meeting of November 17, 2020 and Special Council Meeting of December 8, 2020

The minutes of the Regular Council meeting of November 17, 2020 and the Special Council Meeting of December 8, 2020 were submitted for approval.

The reading of the minutes was waived.

Motion by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. White.

RESOLVED, That the minutes be adopted in their entirety.

A roll call vote resulted as follows:

YEAS: Smith, Nelson, White, Kellerman, and Davis

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

On a vote of 5-0-0-0, the motion carried.

Resolution – In support of defining parameters relating to the expenditure of funds for a security detail and/or personal driver for use by the Mayor of the City of New Roads

The following resolution was submitted for adoption.

A RESOLUTION

In support of defining parameters relating to the expenditure of funds for a security detail and/or personal driver for use by the mayor of the City of New Roads;

WHEREAS, the New Roads City Council has a fiduciary duty to its citizens and as such should offer policy guidance relating to the expenditure of all funds; and

WHEREAS, the New Roads City Council currently offers no policy guidance regarding the expenditure of funds relating to a security detail and/or personal driver for the mayor; and

WHEREAS, a recent report by an investigative reporter of a local news station revealed that considerable city funds were expended by the mayor for a security detail; and

WHEREAS, the same report revealed that six (6) city mayors within proximity to New Roads were polled as to their use of a security detail and/or driver and each mayor reported that they did not use a security detail or driver, and considered such use unnecessary; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the report of such a use of funds has produced displeasure in many of the citizens of New Roads; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to exhibit responsibility and reassure the citizens of New Roads of the city council's commitment to financial propriety, we hereby offer guidance regarding the expenditure of funds for a security detail and/or driver by the mayor.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of New Roads, Louisiana, that the expenditure of funds for a security detail and/or driver for the mayor is hereby authorized for city business only unless otherwise approved by the city council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the nature of the detail, as well as the time of day the detail was performed shall be provided along with request for payment for said detail by officer(s), employee(s) or person(s) performing detail or providing driver services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the mayor shall, at the first council meeting after using a security detail or driver, report to the City Council, the nature of the detail, as well as the time of day the detail was performed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the combined total allotted hours authorized for a security detail and/or driver for the mayor shall not exceed fifty (50) hours per calendar year. The expenditure of funds for any additional hours shall require prior approval of the city council.

Motion to adopt the resolution was offered by Mr. White.

A substitute motion to delay adoption of the resolution was offered by Ms. Nelson.

A roll call vote on the substitute motion resulted as follows:

**YEAS: Nelson and Davis
NAYS: Kellerman, Smith, and White
ABSTAIN: None
ABSENT: None**

On a vote of 2-3-0-0, the motion failed.

A roll call vote on the original motion resulted as follows:

**YEAS: Smith, White, and Kellerman
NAYS: Davis
ABSTAIN: Nelson
ABSENT: None**

On a vote of 3-1-1-0, the motion carried.

Committee Reports

Mr. White reported that a drainage project at the airport will be completed in 30 to 40 days.

Announcement of Yardi Gras Event

Mayor Dukes announced the Yardi Gras contest and encouraged citizen participation.

He also reported that the plans for the “Floats in the Prettiest City on the Water” event were finalized. The drive through display will be open from February 6th to the 16th. Proceeds from the ticket sales will be used to fight crime.

Lastly, Mayor Dukes read his response to the resolution.

“There has been an attempt of a public denunciation made upon my leadership as Mayor of my elite city in regard to use of security detail. If said allegations regarding usage therein were illegal, we would not be here.

It is worth recalling, prior to being elected as Mayor of New Roads, I served as a Police Juror in District 8 for more than ten years. While serving in the capacity as president for one year, I cut expenses and brought millions of dollars in resources to our most vulnerable and those in need in our parish.

My tenure began after the corruption of this office. I came to end it not continue it. The accusations were unwarranted-unnecessary and petty. Said allegations presented by the Investigative Reporter, indicated a total of \$24k for security detail in over a year's time - which actually included 2019 and 2020 -which was noted in the information provided. Herein, fake news.

This - is a mere deflection to defame our reputation and character. It is a regular occurrence for any police officer to work and receive regular and overtime annually. Therefore, the officer would have accrued such hours regardless. The absurdity of the allegations of the assignment was misleading and ridiculous.

I am a leader not a follower. Where others view us as a small city, I see our city as the filet mignon of the state. I am the Mayor of New Roads - the prettiest city on the water. I work hard to attract industries to put our families to work and offer a better quality of life for all who are fortunate enough to live here.

In the last fiscal year as presented in a recent audit during a council meeting, I single-handedly reckoned the past fiscal mistakes and reset the city's financial path by saving the city hundreds of thousands of dollars in less than twenty-four months and we're on track to save hundreds of thousands more. The city's financial future hasn't been this bright in decades. I do not take lightly the concern of the citizens as it relates to the expenditure of funds nor regarding the misuse therein. In today's political and cultural climate, we need to be mindful of not prompting panic or undue anxiety on our citizens. It is imperative our response is based on factual information.

I am a Mayor who stands on Promotion-Prevention-& Honesty. I am a visionary. I'm the promoter of the Prettiest City on the water. I am on the front line of efforts to grow this city every day. I will continue to lead our community toward efficient and lasting results and bringing new resources to the table.

We're already working underneath and within the guidelines of passed resolution. With the exception of being micromanaged which isn't good for any business that's moving in the right direction and getting major results.

Pursuant to the resolution, I have been advised by our city's legal counsel that the actions in question – are well within the guidelines of my position.

Hence, the cause of concern should not be security detail but non-growth of a city with great aspirations. The micro-managing and non-progressive limitations set forth by the resolution would minimize the advancement of us soundly securing our place as one of the busiest tourist destinations in the southern region.

I hereby denounce the last portions of this resolution in regard to micromanagement of hours and reporting, and strongly will continue to uphold its other portions which are already in place.

Come visit us: by way of the majestic James Audubon bridge or fly your private plane into our local airport. We're always ready to serve you and your families at our unique shops and signature restaurants. Or just come enjoy a walk along our amazing False River. We're here to serve you."

With no further business to come before the council, the meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

Cornell Dukes
Mayor

Lynette H. Nelson
Secretary-Treasurer