

CITY OF SALISBURY
SPECIAL WORK SESSION
NOVEMBER 27, 2023

Public Officials Present

Council President D'Shawn M. Doughty
Vice President Angela M. Blake
Councilmember Michele Gregory

Mayor Randolph J. Taylor
Councilmember April R. Jackson

Public Officials Absent

Councilmember Sharon C. Dashiell

In Attendance

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Deputy City Administrator John Tull, Arts, Business & Culture Department Director Allen Swiger, Assistant City Clerk Julie English, Media Specialist Jordan Ray, Deputy Chiefs Chris O'Barsky and Darrin Scott, Acting Deputy Chief of Operations Rob Frampton, City Clerk Kim Nichols, City Attorney Ashley Bosché, and members of the public

On November 27, 2023 the Salisbury City Council convened at 6:00 p.m. in Legislative Session in Council Chambers of SBY Headquarters, located at 115 S. Division Street. Upon the adjournment of the legislative session at 6:55 p.m. Council immediately convened in the Special Session for the purpose of discussing a resolution concerning an apology for the racial terror lynching of three black citizens of Salisbury.

NAACP President Monica Brooks joined via Zoom. LaTanya Christopher and Cynthia King Polk, both descendants of Garfield King, joined in person. James Yamakawa of the Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative also joined in person.

Ms. Christopher read her comments regarding the lynching of her ancestor, Garfield King on May 31, 1898 in Salisbury, and said she wanted peace and respect for all. The apology was not just about her family or the descendants, but was about acknowledging racial injustices, understanding, recognition, and reconciliation. She said it was crucial for the City to acknowledge the historical atrocity and to take responsibility for the past. An official apology from the City Council would serve as a significant step towards recognizing the pain and suffering that Garfield King and countless others endured. She hoped they could honor the memory of Garfield King and all victims of racial violence and said she was not asking for an apology because nobody here did this. She just wanted everyone to treat each other with love and respect.

Ms. Brooks said her goal was to support this resolution to bring reconciliation and thanked Council for placing it back on the agenda, but each time it just brought more pain. She asked that it not be dragged out so the families could get closure.

Mr. Yamakawa commented on how slow it was taking for the resolution to be presented by City Council. Mayor Heath refused to approve it and Legal made some changes to it.

Ms. Kitzrow said that the City's Truth & Reconciliation Committee had met for the past three months but this topic continued to not be discussed there. The purpose of the committee was to have these tough conversations. He agreed that something needed to be done, but feared that with piecemealing it or being short sighted by not having a robust conversation, pieces would be missing. He suggested having the full conversation the community deserved having and suggest strong recommendations from the Mayor that they could support. He said he would hate us to rush it to get it wrong. The City had a Truth & Reconciliation Committee for the purpose to have these tough conversations. He agreed something had to be done and offered to engage in that full conversation.

Ms. Jackson said history could not keep being pushed back. The City played a significant vital part of this.

Ms. Brooks said the Truth Committee did not have power, and could only make recommendations. Change could not happen all at once.

Ms. Jackson supported the resolution being passed and said many people did not feel the City was inclusive here. Pushing it back would make it seem like it never happened. The City played a part in it and we needed to rectify it. We couldn't punish people who were not there, but needed to think of the families who were punished.

Mayor Taylor acknowledged the City needed to come together with a proclamation to acknowledge what happened, apologize and move on in good faith. He agreed it shouldn't take as long as it did.

Mr. Yamakawa noted that proclamations and resolutions were different. Any day could be proclaimed anything, but a resolution was a resolve to do something. Mayor Taylor said he supported turning this into a celebratory moment where the City said it occurred, and put a period behind it and apologized. A resolution would turn it into an action document. He said some of the strike through's in the draft made sense.

Ms. Blake said the governor's office investigated and then hid the reports until Dr. Chavis dug it up in the Governor's house. She said for the City to be given an apology to acknowledge did not seem as if it was given the dignity it was worth. The more profound for this situation would be a proclamation. When it came from the face of the committee, a proclamation was more of a dignified process and held more meaning. She thought the Council had done a good job bringing it forward to an actual Council. She was unsure if the words truly existed to apologize for something of this nature. We needed more time to figure out the verbiage, and would not get there tonight.

Ms. Gregory asked City Attorney Bosche for the definition of proclamations and resolutions and Ms. Bosche concurred with Mayor Taylor- that a proclamation was more

a statement and a resolution was more of an action. Ms. Gregory asked if we only wanted to give words, or if we wanted to act. Ms. Christopher also thought it should be a resolution.

Ms. Gregory approved the resolution as it was written but would like to see the spelling errors corrected. She thought more history could be added to it if they wanted. Ms. Jackson concurred.

Ms. Blake and Mr. Doughty agreed to bring the resolution back to Work Session and to allow public comment.

Ms. Bosche explained it would have public comment on the resolution and then be brought back in the new, revised document for approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following comments were received from four members of the public:

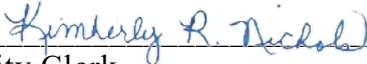
- Speaker thought doing a resolution of this type would get more people to come here. Salisbury was different.
- Speaker appreciated the comments. Some resolutions were already written and approved in our state. Also, the actions that happened in Salisbury were done by a group of people and they got a rope from this building. She encouraged the City to network and partner with the County to make the resolution stand for our County as well as the City. Not all of the residents lived in the City.

(Ms. Jackson exited the room at 8:13 p.m. and returned at 8:15 p.m.)


- Speaker said an apology and admitting the wrong doing came from a place of strength not weakness.
- Speaker announced the second Town Hall on the Georgetown Neighborhood would be held at Inspire One Gallery from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. To speak to the second speaker, of course the County was involved. City residents were also County residents. The Sheriff and Deputies at the time were also involved.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, President Jackson adjourned the Special Work Session at 8:18 p.m.



City Clerk



Council President