MINUTES
BREVARD CITY COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
January 20, 2026 – 5:30 PM

The Brevard City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall with Mayor Copelof presiding.

Present – Mayor Maureen Copelof, Mayor Pro Tem Aaron Baker, and Council Members Gary Daniel, Lauren Wise, Pamela Holder and Dean Lytle

Staff Present – City Attorney Mack McKeller, City Manager Wilson Hooper, City Clerk Denise Hodsdon, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director Dean Luebbe, Assistant City Manager David Todd, Assistant to the City Manager Shawnee Cummings, Communications Coordinator Becky McCann, Planning Director Paul Ray, Senior Planner Emily Brewer, Police Chief Christy Wentzell, Fire Chief Chase Owen, Public Works Director Wesley Shook, Water Treatment Plant ORC Dennis Richardson, Wastewater Treatment Plant ORC Aaron Winans, and Community Center Director Tyree Griffin

Guests/Presenters – Sara VanLear and Sarah Odio of DFI, and Anderea Gonzalez of Fitch Irick

Press – None.

A. Welcome and Call to Order – Mayor Copelof called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

B. Invocation – Pastor Andrew Crimmins of St. Timothy United Methodist Church offered an invocation.

C. Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor Copelof led the pledge of allegiance.

D. Certification of Quorum – City Clerk Denise Hodsdon certified that a quorum was present.

E. Approval of Agenda – Mr. Hooper requested to add a briefing on upcoming inclement weather under Special Presentations as Item I-1. Mr. Wise moved, seconded by Ms. Holder to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

F. Approval of Minutes

F-1. January 5, 2026 Regular Meeting – Mr. Baker moved, seconded by Mr. Daniel to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

G. Certificates / Awards / Recognition

G-1. Proclamation No. 2026-02 White Squirrel Day – Mayor Copelof read the proclamation aloud and will read it again and present it at the White Squirrel Day celebration on February 2nd.

PROCLAMATION N0. 2026-02
WHITE SQUIRREL DAY

The City of Brevard hereby proudly declares and ordains February 2, 2026, as "White Squirrel Day", and further orders that "Groundhog Day" will forever and hereafter be recognized and honored in the City of Brevard as "White Squirrel Day" for the following reasons:

WHEREAS, in keeping with Brevard's great heritage of welcoming and receiving visitors from around the world, Pisgah Piper honorably serves as the City's official white squirrel ambassador for Brevard; and

WHEREAS, Pisgah Piper has established herself as a beloved and valued member of this community, and openly asserts her love for Brevard, waterfalls, mountain biking, hiking, and everything else that makes our town the coolest small town in America; and

WHEREAS, Pisgah Piper has further established herself as possessing unique and valuable skills in making useful and accurate predictions, including accurately predicting the winner of the Super Bowl each year, while Punxsutawney Phil has established himself as (let's be honest) an ill-tempered and a highly unreliable predictor of anything.

THEREFORE, we celebrate this day as Pisgah Piper proudly performs the duties and responsibilities asked of her, and heretofore will make all predictions asked of her on "White Squirrel Day," thereby forever relieving Punxsutawney Phil of these duties. Besides, she's way cuter than Phil.

I, Maureen Copelof, Mayor of the City of Brevard, do hereby proclaim February 2, 2026, as White Squirrel Day in the City of Brevard.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand and executed the Great Seal of the City of Brevard on this the 20th day of January, 2026.

Attest: s/ Denise Hodsdon, CMC, NCCMC, City Clerk s/ Maureen Copelof, Mayor

H. Public Comments

Doug Powell of 170 Oakdale Rd. said I trust everyone had a nice weekend celebrating the life of one of America's great civil rights leaders and orators, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unfortunately, in recent years his full name has been truncated by most of us into MLK, and many simply refer to yesterday's national holiday as MLK Day, which doesn't adequately represent his legacy. Perhaps this has been done out of convenience, or maybe it is somewhat inconvenient to have future generations discover that such an important figure in America's history was actually a preacher whose speeches contained countless references to the Bible because he had earned his doctorate degree in theology. Just like most seasoned Americans used to know the YMCA as an acronym referring to the Young Men's Christian Association, today very few school-aged Americans know that what we now call the "Y", that its original purpose was to infuse Christian values through the mind, body and spirit connection. As President Woodrow Wilson stated, "A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do." An excellent example of this is the Indiana Hoosiers, which won college football's national championship last night on MLK Day. Why is Indiana called the Hoosier State? Most scholars link Indiana's namesake to another important reverend in American History, Reverend Harry Hoosier. Despite Hoosier being illiterate, signer of the Declaration of Independence Benjamin Rush called him the greatest orator in America. Hoosier studied under the tutelage of the famous Methodist minister Francis Astbury, and they preached thousands of times together. Harry Hoosier had an amazing ability to connect with blue collar Americans, who like himself had very little education. The transformations of these rough and tumble types to Christ were so dramatic, when many of them ultimately moved west from New England to the newly established Indiana Territory, they were referred to by the nickname Hoosiers. Why am I sharing this you all tonight? Because the Reverend Harry Hoosier was born a slave in North Carolina but ultimately won his freedom. He was perhaps the most famous Black preacher in the founding era that no one has ever heard of. When he preached most of his very large crowds consisted of both Blacks and whites. Methodist Bishop Thomas Coke said of Harry "I really believe he is one of the best preachers in all the world." In the mid 1780's when Hoosier preached to a Delaware church, it is considered one of the earliest sermons delivered to an all-white congregation by a Black minister.

I. Special Presentations

I-1. Briefing on Upcoming Inclement Weather – Mr. Hooper asked Staff to give briefings on the City's preparations for upcoming Winter Storm Fern. He notified Council that if the storm does precipitate as expected this weekend, City Hall will be closed on Monday, and perhaps Tuesday of next week, and city services will be affected.

Communications Coordinator Becky McCann shared that any notifications and

updates would be posted on the City's website and social media platforms. She encouraged residents to sign up for city alerts and demonstrated how to sign up through the City's website. Additionally, she demonstrated how to sign up for alerts from Transylvania County.

Public Works Director Wesley Shook reported that city crews will work around the clock. He said we have seven trucks and will start plowing in the middle of town and work our way out. He encouraged residents to park in drive-ways off the roads to assist with snow plowing, and if possible, to stay off the roads. Brine and ice melt will be applied to roads and handicap ramps in advance of the storm. Trash pickup will be dependent on the weather. He said to call 911 for trees down on power lines, and to call the Transylvania County OCD non-emergency number for trees down across roads.

Fire Chief Chase Owen reported that as of this evening's forecast, snow ranges are predicted to be from one to two feet with some ice accumulation. The timing for the storm is variable, but as of now it appears that it will start late Friday and go through Sunday. The Department of Transportation is working on getting more equipment to the county. He encouraged residents to make sure they have enough supplies to be self-sufficient for 72 hours plus. He also urged everyone to stay away from downed power lines, to use caution with portable heaters and generators, and to call 911 only in case of an emergency.

J. Public Hearing(s) – None.

K. Consent and Information - Consent Agenda items are considered routine and are enacted by one motion. Mayor Copelof read aloud the items listed and asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Wise moved, seconded by Mr. Baker to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

K-1. Tax Settlement Report – December 2025

K-2. Public Works and Utilities Committee Minutes – November 5, 2025

K-3. Parks, Trails & Recreation Committee Minutes – October 15, 2025

L. Unfinished Business – None.

M. New Business

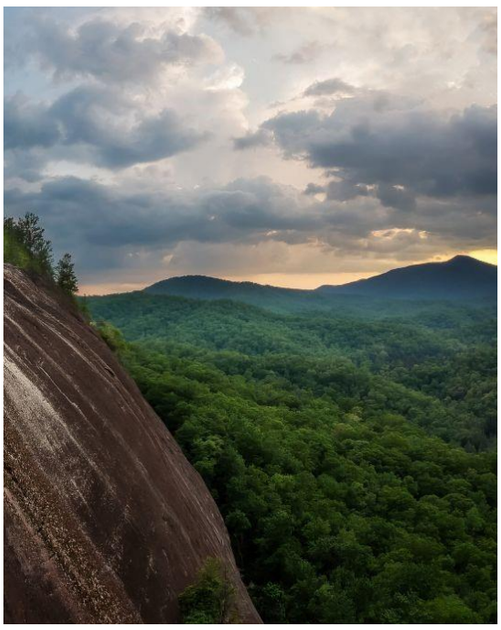
M-1. Azalea Avenue Development Concept and Next Steps – Mr. Hooper introduced Sara VanLear from the Development Finance Initiative (DFI) and Anderea Gonzalez of Fitch Irick, who gave the following presentation:



DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

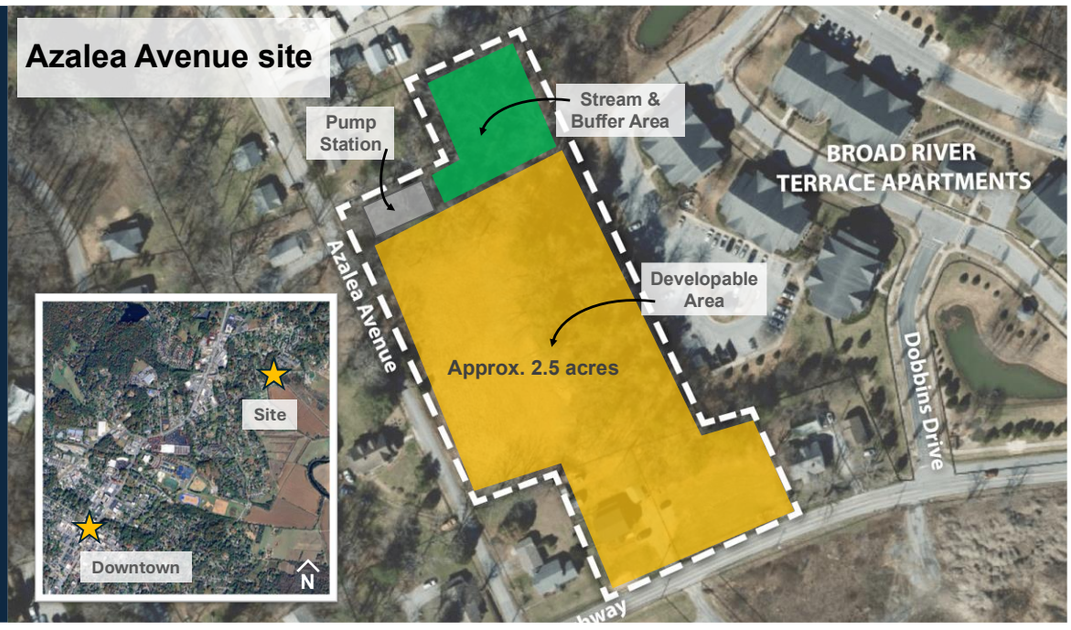
Objectives

- Provide a public update on the Azalea Avenue development
- Discuss Fitch Irick's proposal for Azalea Avenue
- Review next steps



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DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE



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DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

Azalea Avenue pre-development timeline

Q4 2024
- City option on Azalea Avenue site
- Geotechnical assessment
- Public engagement on public interests

Q1 2025
- DFI pre-development analysis
- Rowhouse Architects test fits
- Public engagement on site options

Q2 2025
- City endorsement of site options
- City purchase of Azalea Avenue site

Q4 2025
- LIHTC + CDBG-DR allocation

Q1 2026
- Preparation for Fitch Irick LIHTC preliminary application

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DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

Azalea Avenue development update

- NC Housing Finance Agency's updated LIHTC allocation plan includes:
  - increased tax credit allocation for the West region, and
  - Tropical Storm Helene CDBG-Disaster Recovery funding
- Future CDBG-DR funding paired with LIHTCs is uncertain
- Transylvania County's Tropical Storm Helene recovery eligibility may improve its LIHTC competitiveness in the upcoming LIHTC funding round
- Fitch Irick submitted a Letter of Interest to develop affordable housing on Azalea Avenue. This LOI prompted the Housing Committee to request a development proposal by January 7, 2026 to meet NCHFA's January 23, 2026 preliminary LIHTC application deadline.
- Fitch Irick is a qualified developer:
  - Developed and operates Broad River Terrace, and has deep LIHTC experience across the Southeast (over 50 developments and 300 properties under management)
  - Committed to prioritizing the Azalea Avenue site for January 2026 submission

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Takeaways

1. Fitch Irick submitted a complete proposal on January 7, 2026
2. Fitch Irick's proposal includes:
   - 60 rental units (+/-) affordable to households earning between 40%—60% of the Area Median Income
   - On-site amenities (green space, playground and indoor community space)
   - On-site pump station to accommodate future sewer infrastructure for the neighborhood
   - Primary funding source: 9% Low Income Housing Tax Credits
3. The estimated City participation is land conveyance only

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DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

Fitch Irick Experience



Broad River Terrace
Brevard, NC
(60 Units; 2011)



Love Mill Apartments
Whiteville, NC
(60 Units; 2024)



Woodford Trace Apartments
Aiken, SC
(48 Units; 2021)

https://fitchirick.com/

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DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

Fitch Irick response to Brevard's Guiding Public Interests

Optimize the number of new, quality rental units affordable to Brevard's low-to-moderate income households and local workforce

This proposal truly optimizes the development potential of the Azalea Avenue site both physically and financially. The design incorporates building massing and a site layout that blends seamlessly with the existing fit and form of the surrounding community, and at sixty units, the concept is strategically positioned to attract either 4% or 9% LIHTC equity and CDBG-DR funds to finance key public infrastructure – extending the parcel's benefits well beyond its 3.8 acres.

With this design, sixty of Brevard's hardest working low- and moderate-income households will remain a crucial part of the Brevard community fabric for decades to come.

Include Access to Green Space and Community Amenities for Residents

The development plan, in keeping with Brevard and DFI's recommendations, is intentionally designed to maximize tree preservation by clustering buildings and infrastructure in a manner that minimizes site disturbance, allowing more than one-third of the parcel to remain undisturbed.

By conserving these undeveloped areas, the project maintains existing tree canopy and enhances the site's natural character. The plan also provides 90 parking spaces, or 1.5 spaces per unit, which will require an NCHFA waiver but reflects, based on our experience, the appropriate balance of meeting resident parking needs while minimizing impervious coverage.

In addition, the development integrates a playground and other community-oriented amenities that are thoughtfully located to encourage interaction and shared use, with programming intended to convene residents and foster a strong sense of community.

Attract as much private investment as possible to maximize the impact of public investment in affordable housing

To best position this opportunity amid tight timelines and heavy demand for LIHTC and CDBG-DR resources in Hurricane Helene-impacted areas, Fitch Irick is presenting two financial executions, both structured under a nominal land lease and requiring no additional outlay of funds from the City of Brevard. Each execution, one utilizing a 4%/PAB and the other a 9% LIHTC structure, is focused on fiscal responsibility and maximizing Brevard's public resources, attracting upwards of $12 million in private equity and leveraging as much as $9 million in CDBG-DR funding.

Accommodate the City's Sewer infrastructure extension into Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood

Fitch Irick in developing the neighboring Broad River Terrace community assisted Brevard in accessing CDGB funding to finance necessary infrastructure improvements – including a lift station – to support that development. Given this and comparable experience in structuring applications, scope development and contract management of CDBG-funded infrastructure we are modeling $2m in costs to extend sewer infrastructure to the Azalea/Rhododendron neighborhood.

FITCH IRICK CORPORATION

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

Proposed development

- 60 units (+/-)
- 100% affordable (40%-60% AMI)
- Three buildings: 2-3 stories
- Amenities: green space, playground, and community space
- Pump station incorporated into site design
- Site optimized for LIHTC competitiveness



DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INITIATIVE

Financial Feasibility

Estimated Development Budget

Project Costs	Est. Total ($)	% of Total
Ground Lease	$1	0%
Hard Costs	$14,360,000	74%
Soft Costs	$1,250,000	6%
Contingency	$740,000	4%
Finance Costs	$1,150,000	6%
Reserves	$360,000	2%
Development Fee & Overhead	$1,450,000	8%
Total	**$19,300,000**	**100%**

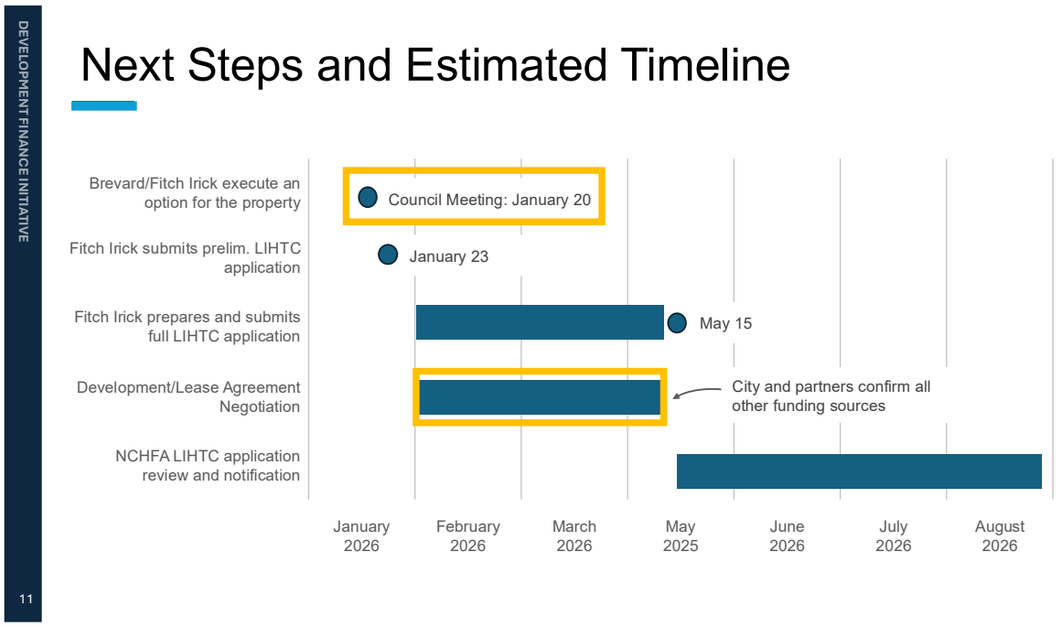
All numbers reflect rounded Fitch Irick budgeted estimates.

9% LIHTC Scenario

Project Funding Source	Est. Total ($)	% of Total
LIHTC Equity	$11,000,000	57%
CDBG-DR Helene Relief	$3,000,000	16%
Primary Loan	$2,950,000	15%
WHLP Loan*	$2,000,000	10%
Deferred Developer Fee	$350,000	2%
Total	**$19,300,000**	**100%**

Land conveyance assumed at nominal rate.
All numbers reflect rounded Fitch Irick budgeted estimates.
**Pending state appropriation.*

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During questions and comments by Council, Mr. Hooper explained that Staff is requesting that Council adopt a resolution endorsing the terms of a draft ground lease that gives Fitch Irick control of the property for up to one year for due diligence and allows a 98-year extension if Fitch Irick secures LIHTC funding and executes a development agreement with the City for the affordable housing project.

Mr. Baker moved, seconded by Ms. Holder to approve the resolution authorizing the City Manager and City Attorney to negotiate the terms of a ground lease with Fitch Irick. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-03
RESOLUTION ENDORSING TERMS OF GROUND LEASE FOR PROPERTIES ON AZALEA AVENUE AND OLD HENDERSONVILLE HIGHWAY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND AUTHORIZING ITS EXECUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Brevard is committed to expanding housing opportunities for all residents and is pursuing affordable housing initiatives in response; and

WHEREAS, the City contracted with the Development Finance Initiative (DFI) to identify sites for a potential multi-family affordable housing project and identified 2.98 acres of land on Azalea Ave; and

WHEREAS, the City acquired the property to facilitate the development of a multi-family affordable housing project on the site and to leverage this development potential to secure funding to extend sewer to the entire Azalea / Rhododendron neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, the City of Brevard received a development proposal from Fitch Irick Corporation, who is a qualified development partner with deep experience in developing and operating housing projects funded by Low-Income Housing Tax Credits; and

WHEREAS, Fitch Irick must have legal control over the property to conduct due diligence activities, including but not limited to submitting an application for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits; and

WHEREAS, City staff and Fitch Irick Corporation have negotiated terms for a ground lease of the property that gives the developer control of the property for up to one year for due diligence, which may be extended for an additional 98 years provided terms of the agreement are met; and

WHEREAS, City Council heard a presentation on the ground lease and its terms at its January 20, 2026, meeting.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA THAT:

Section 01. The terms of the draft ground lease presented to the City Council at its meeting on January 20, 2026 are hereby endorsed; and

Section 02. The City Manager is hereby authorized to execute the ground lease agreement with minor modifications, as necessary.

Adopted and approved this the 20th day of January, 2026.

Attest: s/ Denise Hodsdon, CMC, NCCMC, City Clerk s/ Maureen Copelof, Mayor

M-2. Fire Engine Purchase Update –Chief Owen recalled that in June 2025 Council approved the purchase of a new fire engine for $1M, with $550,000 to be paid by the City and $450,000 paid by the County. A contract was not signed at that time as the City had not received the apparatus that is currently on order and scheduled to arrive anytime now. Since that time the price for the truck has increased to $1,155,901, which brings the financial responsibility of the City to $635,745.55 and the financial responsibility of the County to $520,155.45. Due to this increase, Brevard Fire Department is formally requesting updated approval from City Council to proceed with the purchase at the revised cost and sign a contract now to lock in that price. He noted that once the truck is ordered it will be at least 850 days before it arrives.

Chief Owen explained that this truck would replace a 22 year-old American LaFrance that currently has some major mechanical issues and is well beyond its intended frontline service life and no longer sustainable as a reliable frontline apparatus. He reviewed the Fire Department's updated apparatus replacement schedule which establishes a 15-year ideal frontline service life, with the possibility of extending apparatus up to 10 additional years in reserve status based on condition and reliability, and provides a stabilized long-term debt service strategy.

Mr. Baker moved, seconded by Mr. Daniel to authorize the City Manager to sign the contract to order the fire engine. The motion carried unanimously.

N. Remarks/Future Agenda Considerations.

Ms. Holder expressed thanks to Mayor Copelof, Chief Wentzell and Council Member Lytle for their support and participation in the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration last night. She said a generation or two from now won't know what MLK is, except a day off, so I think keeping that name alive, as well as his vision, is important. She thanked the community for their support and noted that the march was huge with between 150 and 200 people.

Mr. Wise read a prepared statement – This week, we are remembering and celebrating the life of one of America's most impactful leaders, Martin Luther King, Jr. While he contributed and enriched our country in innumerable ways, I wanted to mention his idea of "creative maladjustment" specifically.

Creative maladjustment is the refusal to accept an unjust or dehumanizing society, channeling discontent into constructive action for social change rather than conforming to harmful norms. Dr. King stated you should be "proud to be maladjusted" to racism, violence, and inequality. It is a conscious choice to channel discontent with systemic injustice into fostering positive, collective efforts like civil disobedience, critical thinking, freedom, and justice for all.

"There are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men [and women] of goodwill will be maladjusted until the good society is realized. I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to the self-defeating effects of physical violence."

More than 50 years later, we are again witnessing federally sanctioned acts that emphasize bigotry, hate, racism, and inequality.

Dr. King taught that creative maladjustment means refusing to accept violence as a solution, refusing to accept the marginalization of people based on status or origin, and refusing to be silent when policies and actions harm our neighbors. It calls for speaking out with both courage and compassion, for listening without judgment, and for insisting that justice be tempered with mercy.

Locally, we cannot direct federal policy, but we can stand for the dignity of every person in our community. We can support peaceful expression, equitable treatment under the law, and dialogues that reflect empathy. We can remind ourselves and our constituents that we can respond to hate and ignorance with compassion, courage, and conscience.

Mr. Baker thanked Mr. Powell and Councilman Wise for their comments and said it is important to remember the full context. He said you see a lot of quotes around this time every year and there's often not a lot of understanding of Rev. Dr. King, Jr.'s words. In his letter from jail, he I think was batting around those same ideas and he had been called an extremist at the time. There are times where extremism in the face of a justice system which is unjust is required. I think in times like we are in, unfortunately there are often voices who jump to call people extremists in order to quiet them. We should remember the leaders that have come before us and the things that they have said. He mentioned that he has talked with Attorney McKeller about our committees utilizing video conferencing, which was very common during Covid. It is not allowed at the Council level, but our committees can utilize it, and I think we need to go ahead and take the steps necessary to make that official. He added that as we head into budget season, we need to look at the audiovisual and streaming capabilities in council chambers and make sure that we have the right equipment in place.

Mr. Daniel thanked Mr. Wise for his comments and said I feel like they are important things to keep in mind. I would like to declare myself as creatively maladjusted as possible. We don't get many opportunities to express that in our concern with the state of our nation, but we need to take the opportunities when they come. He hoped everyone stays safe during the storm and noted that we have a battle-hardened staff after Hurricane Helene, and I think we are pretty well ready to deal with whatever comes our way.

Mr. Lytle thanked everyone for their presentations tonight. He said being a part of the celebration last night really made me sit and self-reflect and think about what makes the city great, and it's always the people and it's always all of us looking out for the least of us. We even saw it here tonight. One of the things that Dr. King said, and I'm paraphrasing, he said that I'm not okay unless you're okay, and it's that interrelatedness that he always preached. I think as a Council, as we move forward and we think about our community, if we always keep that in mind that the least of us and that our neighbor is okay, then in our own small way we can maybe mitigate some of the things that we can't control at a larger level. Several times since the election, as people have congratulated me, one of the next things they have said was I hope that we are going to be okay. There is a lot of worry and a lot of angst, and my reply is that all we can do is control our own town, and at the level we're at by helping our neighbor. If we think about our neighbors and we take care of them, those little things will lead to the big things, and we'll be okay. Great time to reflect and looking forward to this next year to make sure that we fulfill that promise.

Mr. Hooper asked everyone to stay safe this weekend.

Mayor Copelof said I will reiterate that we had an amazing ceremony yesterday, and I want to thank Councilwoman Holder who led the team that put it together. I appreciate Chief speaking, I appreciate the community, I thank the NAACP that played big part in the march, and I want to thank the youth from the Job Corps for joining us in the march. I want to thank our elected officials here, because we as an elected body, and our staff…we here in Brevard are so fortunate because we do embody, and the heart of our community is the vision and the values that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put forward, and we will not be intimidated into losing sight of those values. We will go

forward with righteousness and the power of truth and we will hold to that no matter what happens. That is the message I think our community saw yesterday.

O. Closed Sessions – None.

P. Adjourn – There being no further business, at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Holder moved, seconded by Mr. Baker, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Maureen Copelof
Mayor

Denise Hodsdon, CMC
City Clerk

Minutes Approved: February 2, 2026