

**HIGH POINT CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
Monday, August 4, 2025 - 4:30 PM
3rd Floor Conference Room
Municipal Office Building
211 S. Hamilton Street
High Point, NC 27260**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jefferson called the Special Meeting of the High Point City Council to order at 4:30 PM and stated the following members were present.

Present: Mayor Cyril Jefferson, Mayor Pro Tempore Britt Moore, Council Member Amanda Cook, Council Member Vickie McKiver, Council Member Tyrone Johnson (arrived at 4:50), Council Member Monica Peters, Council Member Patrick Harman, Council Member Tim Andrew, and Council Member Michael Holmes

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Council Member Holmes made a motion, seconded by Council Member Cook, to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion Passed with the following vote:

Aye: Mayor Jefferson, Mayor Pro Tem Moore, Council Member Cook, Council Member McKiver, Council Member Peters, Council Member Harman, Council Member Andrew, and Council Member Holmes

Nay: None

Absent: Council Member Johnson

PRESENTATION OF ITEMS

2025-341 **Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative Update**
Staff will provide an update on the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative.

Tasha Logan Ford, City Manager, stated that this was the City's second time participating in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. She noted that a previous cohort led to the development of the City's shared use commercial kitchen project, which is now well underway and has received federal funding. This year's cohort included a broader range of staff members from across departments, and the presentation would feature new voices directly involved in the project. She then turned the presentation over to Assistant City Manager Eric Olmedo.

Mr. Olmedo introduced the team, noting the intentional diversity in experience and departmental representation. Senior leaders on the project were Eric Olmedo and Jelani Biggs, with Meredith Martin as the innovation lead. During Mr. Biggs' parental

leave, Carla Huggins served as project manager and will now be joining the City as a full-time budget analyst. Other team members included Debbie Bragg, Melanie Bruton, Tyler Cole, Bradley Craft, Brian Fowler, Leslie Harrison, Jeron Hollis, and Andy Piper.

The team reviewed the project timeline and structure, noting that High Point was one of 40 cities globally selected for this prestigious initiative. The City's chosen focus was to develop year-round economic opportunities through positioning High Point as the world's home for furniture and design.

Ms. Debbie Bragg detailed the research phase, which targeted businesses, creatives, and residents. The team conducted 18 interviews, utilized 10 information sources, and participated in more than 40 structured hours of meetings and sessions. Findings led to a reframed problem statement highlighting the City's need for a shared vision to expand the economic and creative impact of the furniture and design sectors.

Ms. Melanie Bruton described the ideation phase, where the team hosted three public sessions with residents, youth, and creative professionals. Participants were encouraged to think boldly. Through this process, over 60 idea themes were generated and narrowed down to three key concepts: an arts and design competition, a creative hub, and public art displays.

Ms. Carla Huggins provided insight into the prototyping of the first concept. The original idea of a "design competition" evolved into a more inclusive and celebratory "arts and design showcase" based on community feedback. Participants preferred experiential learning and hands-on activities over a traditional competition format.

Meredith Martin then discussed the Creative Hub concept, which involved idea cards, a business model mapping session, and stakeholder feedback. Discussions included facility needs, disciplines served, revenue models, staffing, and long-term sustainability.

Mr. Tyler Cole presented the third concept, public art displays, was not formally prototyped due to time constraints but remains a strong area of interest. The presentation covered goals, stakeholder alignment, educational opportunities, implementation strategies, potential partners, and the need for dedicated funding and policy frameworks. Youth engagement was emphasized as a cross-cutting priority in all three concepts.

Mr. Olmedo acknowledged the Center for Public Impact, the consulting group contracted by Bloomberg and Harvard, for their facilitation support throughout the initiative. He reviewed the community stakeholders involved, noting widespread positivity and surprise that the City was directly engaging them in shaping ideas. A resident commented that they had never been asked their opinion by the City before.

Mr. Olmedo concluded with next steps, including project prioritization, identifying strategic partners, and pursuing sustainable funding streams.

Council Member Harmon suggested learning from the Coltrane and Folk Festivals to avoid logistical pitfalls, while the Mayor added that current festivals in High Point might naturally align with the new initiatives. Council Member Andrew asked whether the initiative was intended to be self-sustaining. Mr. Olmedo confirmed that the City would not be expected to fund it entirely, highlighting the importance of cultivating partnerships for long-term success.

In response to Council Member Andrew's question regarding other cities using arts as economic drivers, Mr. Olmedo cited examples such as Columbus, Indiana, which hosts a design competition and expo, and a region in Texas known for its large antiques fair.

Council Member Peters thanked staff for their efforts, stating that arts and design are a clear Council priority.

Council Member Harmon referenced a program in London that celebrates architectural and engineering achievements by opening neighborhoods to public tours. Council Member Peters noted the success of the Art Miami event and its limited physical footprint but significant impact. The Mayor added that similar arts districts, such as Wynwood in Miami, demonstrate not only economic potential but also community transformation.

Mayor Jefferson expressed deep appreciation to staff for their year-long commitment. He shared personal reflections from the Bloomberg Harvard gathering in New York City, noting that High Point's chosen challenge stood out positively among peer cities dealing with more traditional infrastructure concerns. He added that private sector interest in High Point's creative future is growing, with some investors already mobilizing funding. He also noted that creatives from Asheville displaced by the Hurricane Helen tragedy have found a welcoming home in High Point, with some even considering relocation.

City Manager Logan Ford emphasized the importance of public ownership in these initiatives. She supported the creation of an independent arts group to oversee public art selection and placement, ensuring cultural representation and diversity. She also reinforced the idea of tying education and youth development into creative sector engagement and career pathways. Council Member Cook echoed this sentiment, describing how a hands-on experience with a local furniture designer helped inspire the vision for more visible and accessible creative career opportunities.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Special Meeting of the High Point City Council, the meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cyril Jefferson, Mayor

Attest:

Sandra Keeney, City Clerk