



# MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Mayor and Members of the City Council

**From:** Rich Olson, City Manager  
Angela Cole, Assistant City Manager

**Date:** November 8, 2019

**Re:** Presentation / Discussion – Street Naming Policy of City Streets and the Renaming of Hoffler Street

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***BACKGROUND:***

During the October 14, 2019 Regular Meeting, City Councilmember Rickey King instructed the City Manager to research and report back to the Council the process that would be required to rename Hoffler Street. Also during the meeting, I informed the Council that the steps required to rename a local roadway are separate and apart from the Naming Policy frequently referenced by City staff when considering parks, open spaces, buildings and facilities. On October 15, my office emailed a memorandum from Assistant City Manager Cole, communicating the applicable City Code section and that additional investigation would ensue to determine the relevant history of the Hoffler Street reference, if any.

As this item was initially asked to be placed on the agenda by Mayor Pro Tem King, the Council tabled it to forgo discussion until the November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting when he would be able to be present.

***ANALYSIS:***

City Code §152.21, adopted by the Council on June 2, 2003, defines the renaming of a local roadway. The subsection to Chapter 152 Streets and Sidewalks, succinctly lists five criteria that must be satisfied before the governing body can authorize a street renaming:

- (A) The request for a street name change shall be made by application to the City Clerk. The application shall be accompanied by a petition signed by every property owner and tenant along the street. At least 51% of the property owners/tenants of property fronting the subject street shall express their approval of the proposed name change.

- (B) At the time of the application, a processing fee in an amount as set by the City Council be paid to the city.
- (C) The assignment of a new name to an existing city street shall not duplicate or closely approximate, phonetically, the names of existing streets in the city planning and zoning jurisdiction, Pasquotank and Camden Counties as determined by the Director of the E-911 Central Communications Center.
- (D) Consideration shall be made by City Council whether the current street name signifies any historical person, event or period, which would require preservation of the name.
- (E) Prior to the renaming of an existing city street, a public hearing shall be held to receive public comment for consideration.

After researching recent Council action to consider and/or adopt a new name for a local roadway, the City Clerk could not identify a time in which the governing body has used the 2003 Renaming City Streets policy. Official minute records indicate the last opportunity the Council took action to rename a street was in 2001 when North and South Martin Street sections were renamed to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, to commemorate the well-known civil rights activist. Again, staff research did not yield any results of action since 2001 prior to the codified policy or since its adoption in 2003.

In keeping with the renaming policy, staff used GIS data in an effort to determine the number of residential units (households) affected by the renaming of Hoffler Street. Because several of the properties along Hoffler Street are multifamily, and the property under single entity ownership, GIS data was not the ideal determinant for the number of residents. Staff resorted to a site survey. The two multifamily developments along Hoffler Street indicate that there are 16 residences (units). There are no other residentially used properties, including single-family, along the roadway. Although staff has determined the number of residences or households along Hoffler Street, this number does not equate to the exact number of "property owner(s) and tenant(s) along the street" that live along the street whose signature will be required if the renaming is pursued. The code does not stipulate minimum age of a tenant, just that *every* property owner and tenant must sign the petition. Likewise, the additional non-residential properties along Hoffler Street indicate that there would be six or seven additional signatures required from the owners of property (individual or corporate entity) along the roadway. State of North Carolina and Elizabeth City State University Foundation are among the property owners.

The Street Naming application fee is not pre-set, but determined by the City Council at the time the petition is received. Although the minutes do not reflect Council's reasoning for allowing a fluctuating fee amount, staff recommends the amount be in proportion to the cost to manufacture the sign.

Staff investigated whether there is historical reference to the existing "Hoffler" name, specifically to the Elizabeth City State University and the greater Elizabeth City community. Relying on research conducted by University administration, archivist, and

academic faculty, City staff has learned that the Hoffler name does hold historic relevance and prominence to the Elizabeth City State University history. In addition to the summary text reprinted below, the additional essay (see attached) was written by University Professor of History Dr. Glen Bowman and published in *The Daily Advance*.

Per my last email he was an prominent physician.

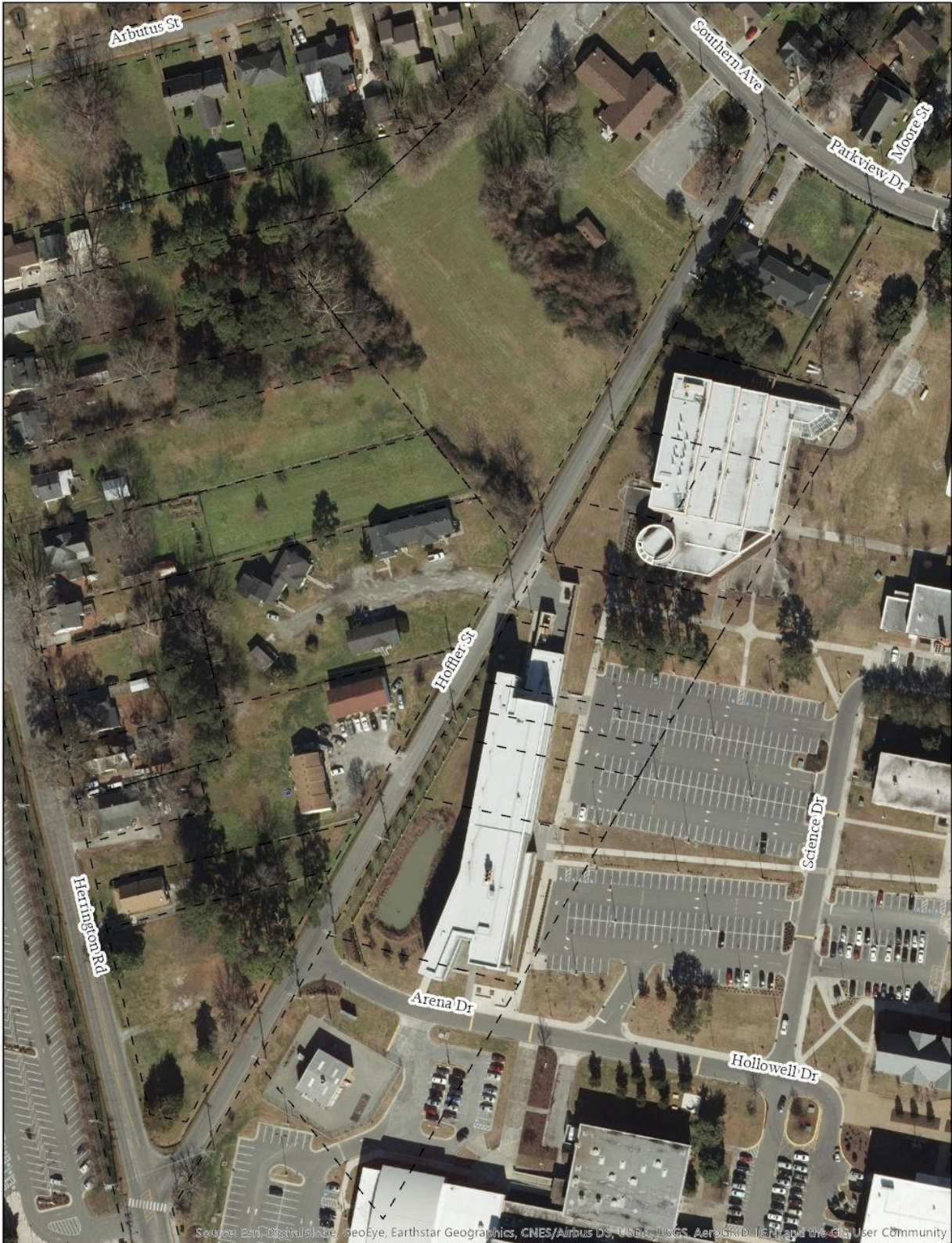
#### FIRST ORGANIZED HEALTH SERVICES

On May 2, 1941, Dr. Trigg received a letter from Dr. Clyde Erwin, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Dr. Carl V. Reynolds of the State Health Board of Education in which they stated that a health center was needed on campus. Dr. Trigg went to Raleigh on May 7, 1941, to confer with these individuals and to secure further information concerning the project. Dr. E. L. Hoffler and Dr. G. W. Cardwell, two black local physicians, were consulted for constructive suggestions. Though unpaid, they eagerly rendered the services sought. However, it was not until November 2, 1945, that health services begin full operation. The first nurse employed was Miss Agnes Middleton. The first infirmary occupied the first floor of Lane Hall (now demolished). Though Dr. Hoffler and Dr. Cardwell started the planning of the health center, the activation of the plans was left to Dr. E. L. Hoffler because Dr. Cardwell passed on September 27, 1943. An efficient program was activated by student constituency within the limited facilities. There was only one room available for bed patients. For this reason, faculty members were not included in the services extended students. Nurse Middleton's stay, though only two years, was very effective. Her successor was Lula Lofton Gibson of Washington North Carolina. These nurses worked under the direction of Dr. E. L. Hoffler, a valued citizen, who was placed on the Elizabeth City State Teacher College Board of Trustees in 1947. He served in this capacity for eight years.

This information is the History of Elizabeth City State by Evelyn Johnson (pg. 105 from the book).

#### ***STAFF RECOMMENDATION:***

This agenda item is presented for information and discussion purposes.



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## Remembering Dr. Ernest Linwood Hoffler

It has been said that one who saves the life of a child in time saves the entire world. Exemplifying the truth of this in early-twentieth century Elizabeth City was Dr. Ernest Linwood Hoffler.

Born in 1882 in Perquimans County, Hoffler received his medical degree from Leonard Medical College, Shaw University. Shaw no longer has a medical school, but in the early 1900's it was the only place in North Carolina where African-Americans could study medicine. In 1908 Dr. Hoffler moved to Elizabeth City. He actively worked for better schools and briefly served as president of Elizabeth City's only African-American bank.

It is difficult to estimate how many lives he saved in this region through his work in pediatric medicine. Starting around 1919, Dr. Hoffler gave free physical examinations to area students; since this was in the days of strictly segregated health care, they were all African-American.

In 1935 he opened up the Well Baby Clinic. At this time infant and child mortality was much higher than it is today, especially among impoverished families. Many did not understand the basics of germ theory, which was not as widely accepted as it is today. Hoffler examined infants and children and taught parents the basics of proper health care. He also treated Elizabeth City State students, either in his office or in the residence halls.

In 1941, the state of North Carolina compelled Elizabeth City State Teachers College to establish a campus infirmary. Dr. Hoffler and another area physician, Dr. G.W. Cardwell, voluntarily treated students in a makeshift facility located in Lane Hall. Note that this was the original Lane Hall; most of the building that exists today was constructed around 1954. Eventually Hoffler's son William completed his medical degree and became the infirmary supervisor.

In 1949, Dr. Hoffler and the Reverend Howard L. Mitchell became the first two African-American members of the Elizabeth City State Board of Trustees. Elected in 1948, Governor W. Kerr Scott appointed them to show his appreciation to African-American voters. His gesture affirmed the growing electoral influence of African-Americans, as well as the increasing success of the NAACP in challenging unconstitutional laws that had disenfranchised minorities.

Both Dr. Hoffler and Reverend Mitchell showed some foresight as trustees. When the state of North Carolina requested that the campus farm be closed, the other trustees wanted to sell the land. Hoffler and Mitchell persuaded them to keep it. Over the next decades this decision proved to be the right one. Standing tall in those former fields forty years later were not corn or potatoes, but rather new campus buildings, including the K.E. White Graduate and Continuing Education Center.

In 1952 the Cardwell-Hoffler Infirmary was constructed. For over sixty years that building, named in honor of the two physicians who gave freely of their time and talents, was the center of campus health care. Passing away in April 1963, Dr. Hoffler rests in Oak Grove Cemetery.