

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL MID-YEAR WORK SESSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2014
HAMLET CITY HALL - 201 MAIN STREET
HAMLET, NC 28345 - 4:30 PM**

Minutes

Governing Body Present:

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| Mayor | William Bayless |
| Mayor Pro-Tem | Johnathan Buie |
| Council Member | Pat Preslar |
| Council Member | Tony Clewis |
| Council Member | Jesse McQueen |
| Council Member | Eddie Martin |

Staff Present:

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| City Clerk | Tammy Kirkley |
| Finance Officer | Jill Dickens |
| Police Chief | Amery Griffin |
| Fire Chief | David Knight |
| Public Works Dir. | Billy Stubbs |
| Personnel Dir. | Edna Cumberland |
| Zoning Officer | Gail Strickland |
| Park & Recreation Dir. | Mitch Bowman |
| Depot & Museum Dir. | Miranda Chavis |
| Senior Center Dir. | Donna McMillan-Aiken |
| WTP Supt. | Robert Brown |
| WWTP Supt. | EG Dunn |
| Bldgs & Main. Dir. | Doc Sylvain |
| Public Works Supr. | Benny Billingsley |
| Public Works Supr. | Ernie Billingsley |

Others Present: Approximately 12 police officers, RCDJ Representative, Don Norton, Cathy Kirkley

Call to Order. Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order. He took a moment to inform everyone that the manager's husband is in the hospital with some serious issues and that Mrs. David will not be in attendance today.

Adoption of Agenda. Mayor Bayless stated due to the unforeseen circumstances today, the agenda would need to be amended. Item III, the manager's power point presentation will need to be deleted, and two items need to be added to Item IV. – Discussion of Dilapidated Buildings; and the Videoing and Sound of the council meetings being televised. Council agreed to amend the agenda as presented and the motion carried unanimously. Councilman Preslar made the motion and Councilman Members Buie and Clewis provided the second.

Consideration of the Marks Creek Industrial Park Agreement. Mayor Bayless noted that Marks Creek Industrial Park Development would like to turn real property over to the City; however, a number of council have not had an opportunity to review the material. The city clerk informed council that several months back, the subject organization offered a donation of around 60 something acres of land to the City with the stipulation being that if the City ever made revenue by virtue of the land, to in-turn invest the revenues into Capital Projects for the City of Hamlet. As noted, this land donation offer was presented to the city several months ago and the previous council was aware of the offer. The Mayor and council wanted more time to review the material. The item was then tabled until the February 11, 2014, Regular Council Meeting by motions of Council Members Buie and McQueen. The motion carried with a 5-0 vote.

Consideration of the Building Inspection Agreement between the City of Hamlet and Richmond County. This agreement is to allow for the county to perform Hamlet's property inspections. Mayor Bayless stated this is the same contract that the city has had every year. It was pointed out that the manager made a few changes to the agreement per legal advice and the mayor noted the liability changes that were included. Gail Strickland joined the meeting and the clerk asked her to give council an update concerning the subject agreement with the county. Mrs. Strickland reported that her understanding is the City received the agreement in the fall of 2013, which was dated June/July of 2013. She reported that the manager had concerns with some of the "hold harmless" language within the agreement and sought legal advice and changes were made. The city clerk received the hard copy of the agreement last week. It was confirmed that there are some projects in-waiting due to the contract and Gail noted per the contracted Code Enforcement's Officer's advice, the city was going to have the county to inspect a certain building to see if it could be condemned but could not do so. Mrs. Strickland further explained. The City doesn't use the building inspector a great deal because Hamlet has a Code Enforcement Officer; however, the residents use the building inspector. The City issues zoning compliances. The residents first obtain their zoning permit and then they must go the county for a building inspection.

Councilman McQueen questioned Number 2 of the agreement concerning liability and there was a brief discussion concerning the changes. Councilman Buie then motioned to table the agreement until the February 11, 2014, Regular Monthly Council Meeting and Councilman McQueen made a second to the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous 5-0 vote.

Nuisance and Dilapidated Properties. The Mayor stated that he wanted to especially review this information in part due to the article that was in the newspaper recently. Gail Strickland presented each council member with an informational hand-out of data gathered over the past five years concerning dilapidated structures within the city limits and steps taken by the City of Hamlet to address the matter. The hand-outs included the following information: a list of property owners who are now receiving fines for code violations and the accrued amounts; a list of properties which the city abated over the last five years and the amount of taxpayer's money that has been spent on abatement, which totaled \$87,384.51 for 14 properties, this does not include the funds that is budgeted for this fiscal year; a list of partners who the city has worked with to abate properties; and a list of properties wherein the owners abated the structures after the city sent letters and worked with them. A total of 42 structures have been removed within the last five years in the city limits and a few were in the ETJ area. Mrs. Strickland then noted a map of specific property areas currently receiving fines and also areas wherein structures have been removed.

She then stated the city has for the past several years budgeted \$20,000 annually to address dilapidated structures. This fiscal year's funding has not yet been used but staff is in the process of taking the necessary steps to abate a few structures before the fiscal year ends.

A set of apartments in the city was initially targeted for possible demolition during this fiscal year; however, due to the delay with the aforementioned Building Inspections Agreement with the County and the need to have the apartments inspected for possible condemnation, the city had to focus on other structures for this fiscal year. It is anticipated that the problematic apartments will be targeted next fiscal year.

Councilman Clewis reminded the group that by the city working with NCDOT, a dilapidated commercial property located on Hwy. 74 East was recently demolished and \$16,000 in fines was collected by the city. Mrs. Strickland explained the City does not obtain possession of the properties, which are demolished with city tax payers' dollars. A lien is filed against said properties. Gail gave further details for the process of demolishing these types of structures.

The mayor asked that the local newspaper be sent this information as a reply to the recent letter to the journal against the city concerning the dilapidated structures. Mr. Preslar pointed out that one cent on the taxes equals the \$20,000 budgeted to address these types of structures.

Tony Clewis mentioned the way some of these owners talk to Ms. Strickland when she is addressing these issues and doing her job and he asked council to consider what type of action they can do to help. Mr. McQueen suggested having a recorded line. Mr. Griffin said his department has room to add recorded lines to his system. Mr. Buie, Clewis and McQueen motioned to record all lines at city hall. Mr. McQueen felt this may help out in other situations as well.

After further discussion on the current phone system at city hall, council then suggested to check on getting a new phone system for city hall that would have caller ID, recorded lines and the ability to leave interchangeable messages. It was then the consensus of council to table the motion until the February meeting and to get the police chief to look into another phone system and provide council with a report at the February meeting. Mr. Preslar suggested looking at voice over internet as well. Cathy Kirkley asked if it is legal to record phone lines without notifying the person on the other end that they are being recorded and Chief Griffin confirmed that it is and Mr. Preslar confirmed that is and explained. Mayor Bayless added that it has beeps with it to tell that it's being recorded. Mayor Bayless thanked Ms. Kirkley for the question.

A&P Building Update. Police Chief Griffin gave an update on the plans for the A&P Building. The plans and specs cost \$28,500. The chief has received the engineer's floor plan only at this point, the mechanical and heating and air plans have been started but are not yet completed. The police chief explained that these drawings will be signed off by two engineers. Mr. Griffin stated he was told the approximate cost for a new roof will be roughly \$60,000. The chief said he has checked with a number of various companies on the costs to rehab the building and he is at about \$364,000, excluding the electrical and plumbing work, and the excluding the parking lot. He talked about bidding the job out on a per job verses per sq. ft. He noted if the repairs are bid out per sq. ft. it will cost about \$1,000,000. Mr. McQueen and Mr. Griffin talked about there being people out there that will bid on it per the job (for cost and labor) and not per sq. ft. A general contractor will be needed if grant funds will be given.

Johnathan Buie then mentioned the idea of other options for the building. He noted the parking issues and lack of room at the current city hall; he suggested building a new city hall and allow the Hamlet Police Department to occupy the current city hall. He discussed the option of having a bigger chambers and an area to hold closed sessions without putting the public outside to wait. Mr. Buie said this would benefit more citizens because more people access city hall than the police department. The police chief stated that the PD needs a training room, additional offices, evidence space, etc. He talked about the one 12x12 office that is shared. It was confirmed by the police chief that they are in need of office space, storage space, finger printing space. The chief confirmed that the HPD could utilize the entire A&P Building.

Mayor Bayless stated that he did some figuring after discussing the possibility of having a new city hall and the cost of the project would probably be well in excess of \$1 million, considering the tearing down of the old A&P Bldg. and rebuilding and remodeling the old city hall to conform to what is needed for a police department. He felt the money could be put to better use.

The Mayor said he was hoping to be able to discuss the financing of the rehab of the building tonight but will do so at another meeting with the manager. Mr. Preslar noted that Hamlet is in good shape and it is probably something that council may consider, he hopes the city can continue with what Chief Griffin has in mind. Mr. Preslar said he would like to see the city search for and apply for grant funds to help make this happen. Councilman Martin agreed that the building should be a police department. Council discussed various uses for the building.

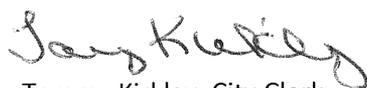
Jesse McQueen said council also has to think of future aspirations and keep in mind the infrastructure needs and the gym that needs to be considered as well. He said realistically the responsibility of this board is the future of this town. The infrastructure is in bad shape. The mayor reminded council that items such as busted pipes come from enterprise money and not tax payers' dollars. Benny Billingsley talked to council about certain areas in the past which have caused major problems and the amount of funding it takes to address these issues.

Gail Strickland then reported that staff has received a message from the manager that her husband, Brain, is in really bad shape and they do not think he is going to make it and explained the information that was given. Councilman Tony Clewis then led the group in prayer for Brain David. Council agreed that the meeting should end.

Council briefly discussed the city attorney situation. Motions were made by Council Members Preslar and McQueen to ask Brent Garner if he will continue to serve as Hamlet's interim attorney through the end of February. The vote passed unanimously.

Motion to Adjourn. At 5:33 pm, Council agreed to adjourn the meeting due to the circumstances. Council Members McQueen and Clewis motioned to adjourn the meeting. The vote passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,


Tammy Kirkley, City Clerk

