

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL MONTHLY MEETING  
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009 - 7:00 P.M.**

**Minutes**

**Governing Body Present:** Mayor Jeff Smart, Mayor Pro-Tem/Councilman: Bill Bayless;  
Council Members: Pat Preslar; Abbie Covington; Jesse McQueen; Tony Clewis

**Staff Present:** City Manager, Marchell David; City Attorney, Steve Futrell; City Clerk, Tammy Kirkley; Chief Mechanic, Greg Henson; Fire Chief, David Knight; WTP Superintendent, Robert Brown; WWTP Superintendent, EG Dunn; Finance Collections, Dena Carter; Finance Officer, Mike Deese; Senior Center Director, Susan Sellers

**Others Present:** Reverend Randy Blanchard; JT Grimes; Nat Campbell; Jim Graham; Olivia Webb- Daily Journal

1. **Call to Order.** Mayor Smart called the meeting to order.
2. **Invocation.** Reverend Blanchard of Fellowship United Methodist Church offered the invocation.
3. **Adoption of Agenda.** The agenda was unanimously approved by motions of Councilwoman Covington and Councilman Preslar.
4. **Approval of Minutes.** Minutes to the January 13, 2009 meeting were unanimously approved by motions of Councilman Bayless and McQueen. The minutes were approved as written.
5. **Comments from Attendees.** **Jim Graham** Chairman of the Hamlet Depot Museum Board presented council to give an update. He spoke about an ongoing project the board is working on "Voice of the Rails" wherein they are getting people to tell stories and histories of Hamlet. Mr. Graham reported that they were able to purchase video equipment with funds they received from the Cole Foundation Grant. He then went on to state that the Downtown Hamlet Christmas Program that was coordinated by Lena McLean and Lynn Blake which helped to bring in close to 400 visitors to the Depot. Mr. Graham also reported that there is a Laurinburg resident who wants to donate a model train display worth about \$60,000 to the museum and the board would like to put the display in the Lassiter Bldg. when completed. A board member has asked the lady donating the display to make sure she has no family members wanting it before the board accepts it. There is a video of the display at City Hall. Festival at the Depot – Mr. Graham stated that the board is planning a mini festival that will include about 10-15 vendors. He stated that they plan to have about five to six food vendors and the others will be strictly railroad vendors. The event will take place the first Saturday in May. A name for the festival has not yet been determined.

Mr. Graham stated that their group is trying to get more people to visit the Depot and Hamlet, and that they are averaging about 40-50 people per week to go through the Depot.

The mayor thanked Mr. Graham for the updates and asked him to come back and give a reminder of the event as it gets closer to the date.

**Gerrod Morrison** presented council to discuss several issues. First he recognized John Coltrane, Kenneth Lee and Henry Frye. He noted that Mr. Lee grew up in the area where Sandhills Regional Hospital is currently located and said he was the first black to graduate Chapel Hill Law School; first black to start a Savings & Loan in NC and has a book out now entitled "No Way." He wants to see these people acknowledged while they are living. Mr. Morrison suggested having some type of Wall of Fame set up for these three local black gentlemen. Mr. Morrison noted that Henry Frye is from Ellerbe and he was the first black elected to the NC Senate and the first black Chief Judge in the NC Supreme Court.

Lastly, Mr. Morrison recognized John Coltrane and gave background information on Mr. Coltrane. He stated that currently there is nothing in Hamlet or in the County recognizing these gentlemen. Mr. Morrison talked about John Coltrane's background and said that he and others are putting together a John Coltrane Music Festival to be held the first weekend in October. He stated that we need to look at Richmond County as being the centralized hub of cultural tourism which is economic development. Mr. Morrison stated that Coltrane is respected worldwide and that he is the greatest saxophone player in history. He suggested that the county needs to try and bring people to us and show them what we have and come together to show our appreciation for John Coltrane's accomplishments. Mr. Morrison expressed that he is sharing a dream and a vision.

Councilman Preslar inquired about the Blue Room located off of Hamlet Avenue being Coltrane's birthplace and Mr. Morrison explained. Mr. Preslar suggested using some of the property near this area as a catalyst in commemorating Mr. Coltrane. Mr. Morrison reported that his group is looking at having an outdoor event for the first few years with this year's event being held the first weekend in October. Mr. Preslar suggested discussing the matter at the upcoming Planning Session. The Mayor asked Mr. Morrison to keep council updated as the event gets closer.

- 6. Presentation of the City's Dam Study by JT Grimes.** Mr. Grimes presented his findings from the study performed on the city's dams via a power point presentation of a historical review and deficiencies of the water lake dam. He gave some background information on his experience. The presentation included: aerial views of the drainage areas for the water lake dam and city lake dam; (the water lake dam is the major concern) the purpose of the study; summary of historical review; water lake dam is the primary spillway; approximately 85 yrs old; concrete deficiencies and other deficiencies such as heavy brush and large trees and abandoned pipes; observations and findings via study thus far -spillway capacity along with the trees. Other information included: spillway

system upgrades – the current spillway is not large enough but can be repaired and supplemented with emergency spillways on each end; structural evaluation of the next part of the engineering phase – the need to make sure the concrete is competent.

The City Lake Dam has insufficient spillway capacity and concrete deficiencies. Mr. Grimes discussed the requirements by N.C. Dam Safety.

After the presentation, Mr. Grimes welcomed questions. Mr. Preslar inquired if the city could gain capacity in the lake by making it a foot or two higher. Mr. Grimes replied it could be done, but it would be costly and explained. Mr. Preslar confirmed that 12 inches will probably give about 24 days worth of water; he said it would increase the city's reserves and show we're trying to be proactive. Mr. Preslar asked if increasing the water capacity by restructuring the dam could be an approach to obtaining grants from Clean Water Funds. Mayor Smart stated that this is a real concern and the city is also concerned about the funding. Mr. Grimes stated that he will be coordinating with other necessary specialists in the project and that he is basically recommending doing the next study and that we need to be moving along with the Water Lake Dam, which is classified as a high risk. Councilman Bayless and Mr. Grimes discussed removing trees near the water lake area and Mr. Grimes noted that specialists will have to be the ones to remove the trees. JT Grimes then explained discussions he has had with a concrete specialist, saying that structural and geo-evaluations will be the key to determining if the concrete is competent or not. Mr. Grimes reported that he is finished with the initial evaluation that was approved for this year. The mayor then confirmed that Mr. Grimes is waiting on council to make a decision on moving to the next evaluation. Mr. Grimes stated that \$100,000 would cover both evaluations, design plans and all four permits as discussed earlier. The mayor stated that the next step is to select a contractor to do the work that will cost an additional \$100,000 above what we've already spent. Mr. Grimes confirmed that this is the next step.

JT Grimes stated that he can look at the City Lake Dam at the same time to save some funding in the long term. Councilwoman Covington asked about what kind of an extension the NC Dam Safety would agree to and Mr. Grimes explained. She inquired about Clean Water Funds that may be available. The manager reported that the State doesn't put a lot of money in to dams. She stated that the water lake issues were not brought to council's attention until last year. Mrs. David explained that "Supply" may get points with grants and reminded that the state is pushing for "Regionalism" and warned about not putting our self out of the market. Mr. Grimes concluded with saying that the permits can be ready towards the end of May with work beginning late summer or early fall if everything is approved and the funds are found. Mayor Smart thanked Mr. Grimes' presentation and stated that the city will be in touch.

7. **Approval of Fire Contracts Between the City of Hamlet and Richmond County, and the City of Hamlet and Dobbins Heights.** Councilwoman Covington questioned the County’s agreement, under Paragraph 3’s language that states “This schedule is based on a prescribed annual fire fee and shall be a minimum of, but not limited to, one hundred thousand dollars.” The manager confirmed that amount will be the minimum amount unless there is a major drop-off with the County’s tax scroll. With there being no other discussion, Councilman Bayless and Preslar motioned to approve both fire contracts as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.
  
8. **Request to Advertise Delinquent Taxes.** Mayor Smart reported that the Tax Collector is requested permission to advertise the delinquent tax listing in the Daily Journal and that the last day to be able to pay and be removed from list will be March 13, 2009. He asked council’s wishes and Councilman Preslar motioned to approve the request to advertise and Councilman McQueen seconded. All were in favor. Mr. Deese confirmed the past amounts and stated that the processing fees and penalties are added back to the tax payers who are delinquent. He reported that the collection rate was 87.9% through the month of January. Council then discussed the need to accept payments via credit cards.
  
9. **Adoption of Budget Amendments.** Mike Deese stated that the submitted amendments are the immediate needs to be addressed right now. The manager explained that the city is conservative on the front which helps out. Mayor Smart noted the various budgeted items and stated that the city has done a good job thus far for this year. Councilwoman Covington asked if we’ve heard from the state informing us that their funding may dry up by the end of the year and Mrs. David replied that we have not and stated that the only thing the city depends on is the sales tax revenue, which comes from local spending within the county. Mrs. David explained that the sales tax payment may run behind schedule somewhat this year. The proposed amendments were as follows:

**General Fund: Revenues**

Miscellaneous Revenue	Increase	\$33,000
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**General Fund: Expenditures**

Admin. Dues/Subscriptions	Increase	\$1,025
M&R Library	Increase	\$2,425
Sanitation Misc.	Increase	\$450
Health Promotions	Increase	\$300
Cemetery	Increase	\$5,000
Computers	Increase	\$3,800
Main St. Program	Increase	\$20,000
Total:	Total	\$33,000

**Enterprise Fund: Expenditures**

Cont. Capital Reserve	Decrease	\$5,000
Rehab Dams	Increase	\$5,000
Net Change:		-0-

Councilman Bayless motioned to adopt the budget amendments and Council members Clewis and McQueen seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**10. Departmental Reports.**

**Fire Chief David Knight** shared a letter from Mr. B.K. Jones with the County regarding fire inspections for the schools within Hamlet's ETJ areas. He reported that Hamlet has the approval from the County Commissioners to do these inspections and that they will probably begin within the next few weeks doing so.

**Greg Henson** reported that the motor in the bulldozer has been out of service but will be up and running within 2-3 weeks.

**Gail Strickland** reported that the city has advertised the bid packages for the demolition of 515 Spring Street. She stated that the bid packages have been mailed out to contractors. Mrs. Strickland stated that the owner of 218 Wilmington Street has agreed to and has signed the agreement to have the structure taken down by February. Councilman Preslar questioned the problem property on Pine Street and Mrs. Strickland confirmed that a letter was mailed to the owners last week. She reported that the city has now taken down two structures and other structures have been cleaned-up with grant funds.

**Mike Deese** updated council on the projected sales tax revenues.

**11. City Manager's Report.** Mrs. David reported that she has received a petition signed by most of the business owners on Main Street wherein requesting action to take down the trees on Main Street. She stated that the business owners are waiting for a response to the petition and asked council how they wished to proceed.

After discussion, Councilman Preslar motioned to go ahead to remove the trees on Main Street, but to put a plan in-place to replace or refurbish the areas affected, and to pressure wash the staining on the sidewalks. Councilman Clewis added that the stumps and sidewalks have to be addressed and suggested contacting NC State University to get assistance with what to put back in place of the trees. Mr. Preslar again referenced his motion to address the trees and to have a plan in-place; he added that the city could follow the Small Town Main Street plan to include the stumps and pressure washing the streets. Councilman McQueen questioned the need for a motion when council had earlier agreed to include the trees within the Small Town Main Street plan. The manager noted that the tree policy states that if the city takes down trees, we have to go back with something that is appropriate for the area. Councilman Bayless questioned the motion when there is currently no plan in-place. Councilwoman Covington seconded Mr. Preslar's motion on the floor.

Councilman Clewis asked for further discussion and questioned when and how the trees will be taken out. Mr. Bayless asked if the city is going to remove the trees before there is a plan in-place. The manager confirmed that the city will get with the Small Town Main Street staff as to the suggestions on replacement before any trees are removed.

Councilwoman Covington stated that the current trees have proven to be a nuisance and the action will be a two-step process; she added whatever is done in the area, there will be a plan. Councilman Preslar stated that staff will not need to go back before council before the trees are removed, but to see what the Small Town Main Street staff suggests in the matter.

The manager confirmed that the city will ensure that the job is done correctly. Mr. Preslar reiterated his motion to have the trees removed once there is a plan in-place with the Small Town Main Street group and have the sidewalks cleaned. Councilman Bayless inquired about the forming of mud holes during the time in between the removal and the replanting. Mrs. David confirmed that there will not be any mud holes left in the areas.

Mayor Smart called for a vote to the motion on the floor; the vote passed 4-1, with Councilman McQueen opposing. Mr. McQueen stated for the record that he is opposed to the motion because he would rather wait to hear from the Small Town Main Street group next week and he doesn't see what that amount of time would matter.

- 12. Comments of Council.** Councilman Clewis noted his appreciation to Mrs. Strickland's efforts with the abandoned structures. He also asked everyone to continue to pray for Bert Unger.

Councilwoman Covington thanked everyone for their efforts in holding everything together.

Councilman Preslar echoed Mr. Clewis's words on praying for Bert & Barbara Unger. He then offered congratulations to Abbie Covington on her retirement from the Community College System, adding that 38 years at one place is an accomplishment.

Councilman Bayless reported that he has received two phone calls in the last two weeks about the dead-end area on Mclean Street. He requested that the city look into putting up some type of reflectors prior to getting to the dead-end area.

Councilman McQueen took a moment to thank David Knight for his proactive assistance involving some recent B&E cases. He also reported that he had talked with Benny Leviner regarding the fees concerning the second water tap. Mr. McQueen asked council to look at lowering the fee for residents to reconnect to the water tap service. He said currently the reconnect fee is the same amount as an initial connection fee. Mr. McQueen stated that that is a bit much for a reconnect fee, and suggested that the city look at things to help the citizens and tax payers. Councilman McQueen stated that he would like to put that on the agenda to discuss during the Planning Session.

Mr. McQueen mentioned that several employees are in attendance tonight and asked the manager if it is mandatory that the department heads attend the council meetings and the manager confirmed that it is not.

Councilman McQueen suggested if there is no interaction or if nothing is on the agenda concerning a specific department, then there is no real need for that department head to be at the meetings. He further suggested that staff come to the meetings when needed because they already put in eight hours per work day and that they have families to attend to. Chief Knight gave his thoughts on attending the meetings and explained that he does so in order to stay abreast of what's going on with the city.

Mr. McQueen then asked the manager what the city is doing to prepare for the tough economic times ahead. He asked if there are any current openings with the city and Mrs. David confirmed that there are no openings and that no new positions will be created.

**13. Mayor's Comments.** Mayor Smart reminded the public of the Golden Leaf Foundation meeting tomorrow at 3:00 p.m. and encouraged the public's support in the matter. He announced that the next Small Town Main Street meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 17, at 6:00 p.m. at Hamlet City Hall and encouraged all to attend. The mayor concluded with reporting that the planning meeting will be held on Friday, March 6 and again on Monday, March 9, at 9:00 a.m.

**14. Adjournment.** With there being no other business to discuss, Councilman Bayless and Preslar motioned to recess the meeting until Friday, March 6, at 9:00 a.m. for the Planning Session. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Kirkley, City Clerk