

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2018
7:00 PM**

MINUTES

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro-Tem	Johnathan Buie
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	David Lindsey

Staff Present:

City Manager	Jonathan Blanton
City Attorney	Kevin Hornik
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
IT	Zach Garner
Police Officer	Michael Sale
Police Chief	Scott Waters
Public Works Director	Billy Stubbs

Others Present: Pastor Jerry Mims, Greg Shelley, Johnnie Butterfield, Linda Bayless, Patrick Dunn, Jane McCall, Nina Winstead, Bill Hoyle, Brenda Martin, Chuck Cobb, Kay Cavendish, Tim Nevinger, Bobbie Williams, Robin Hewitt, Christine Carroll with the RC Daily Journal and Amy Guinn with the Richmond Observer.

- **Call to Order**

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order. He reported technical issues with the video and sound equipment. New carpet was installed at City Hall today requiring the equipment to be unplugged and Staff has not been able to get it operational.

- **Invocation**

Pastor Jerry Mims of Calvary Baptist Church offered the opening prayer.

- **Moment of Silence**

The Mayor announced the family of Earl Bradshaw sent a flower arrangement to City Hall. His family said he loved City Hall and would want us to have them. Mr. Bradshaw passed away last Wednesday at the age of 102. The Mayor asked for a moment of silence to commemorate Mr. Bradshaw's longevity and impact on the City.

- **Adoption of Agenda**

Council Members Johnathan Buie and Eddie Martin motioned to adopt the agenda with the removal of Item 13. The vote passed 4-0.

- **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes for the February 13, 2018, Budget Review and Regular Monthly Meeting and March 2, 2018 Budget Work Session were approved by motions of Council Members Johnathan Buie and David Lindsey. All approved. Council Members Johnathan Buie and David Lindsey provided the motion and second to approve the March 2, 2013 Closed Session Minutes. All approved.

- **Comments from Attendee**

Mr. Greg Shelley spoke to Council in regards to crime in the Terry Street area. Over the last 12 months or so, the section of Terry St has experienced drug activity. He feels the Hamlet Police Department is doing what they can with their investigations. In a 5-6-week period, the Hamlet Police and Rescue have been in the area 5 times; 4 times for drug overdose. Mr. Shelly stated last week there was an altercation in the street that was drug related. He stated drug deals are in plain view. He has concern for his family and asked Council to fund the Police Department's request for additional officers or utilize the SBI and FBI to get a handle on the situation before it becomes a drug community. Mr. Shelly said he feels Hamlet has a serious gang and drug problem.

Ms. Johnnie Butterfield addressed Council. She is from Hamlet but currently lives out of town. She is in town on weekends with her mother. Ms. Butterfield is concerned with the drug activity on Terry Street. She commended the Hamlet Police Department and asked Council to help the Police Department by hiring a Narcotics Officer. She explained Huntersville has one and they were able to get a handle on the drug activity. She provided statistics on opioid drug activity. She asked Council to drop their egos and hire a Narcotics Officer. She suggested they write grants, work with surrounding agencies, citizens, hospitals, and law enforcement. She said it is not throwing money away if they get the Police Department what they need.

Mayor Bayless asked if the properties in the area were rentals and Mr. Shelley responded there is only 1 rental. He said the problem is with the homeowners. The Mayor inquired if the Police Department was familiar with the situation. Chief Waters acknowledged and stated the department has been patrolling the area and getting tag numbers. Council Member McQueen suggested the Chief not give any further information on the investigation at this time.

Council Member McQueen referred to a Task Force that has been created to help. He said there has been some gang activity but no more than the surrounding areas. He stated the Police Department does not have a narcotics officer but does have 3 detectives and sometimes the best solution is not throwing money at the problem. Mr. McQueen said the crime rate is not much higher than in the past but now it is related to drug activity. He said the problem is not that the City does not have a drug officer. He suggested the money budgeted to the Police Department for training may need to be utilized for certifications in drug interdiction. He stated Council and the Police Department are addressing the issue.

The Mayor commented we do not want this in the City and we are working on getting grants.

Ms. Brigman suggested the Police Officers arrest everyone to get the number of crimes up. Council Member McQueen stated it is not a numbers issue. He asked Ms. Brigman to give a definition of a specialty officer and asked the Police Chief to provide his department's positions. After the list was given by Chief Waters and Mr. McQueen, Ms. Brigman stated they do not have a narcotics officer.

City Manager Jonathan Blanton reported he went to Terry Street with the Police Chief after receiving notification of the activities in the area. He assured the attendees that the City has invested money into the Police Department and have joined with Richmond County to work towards resolving the issue. Mr. Blanton stated communication is the key to solving the problem and asked that citizens contact him or the Police Department with information.

Council Member Lindsey reported Council has given consensus for a gang activity officer at a cost of \$50,000.00. He feels the City is moving forward as best as we can.

Council Member Johnathan Buie asked where is the US Attorney General assistance? He said, based on his words from last August, he would help the City of Hamlet with drug and gang activities. Chief Waters stated some things are in place that he cannot discuss in an open meeting.

Mayor Bayless asked Jane McCall, who was on the Agenda as Item 7, to make her presentation. Mrs. McCall explained she was representing the Board Members of the Friends of the Library. She thanked the City for the improvement in the landscaping in the past year, thanked the Seaboard Festival Day Committee who contributed financially and thanked the Hamlet Tree and Beautification Committee that works with students from Monroe Avenue and planted trees and shrubs at the library last year at Arbor Day. The Friends of the Library feel the area lacks something where the plantings were made. She read a letter requesting permission to install a decorative fence on the library property on the Henderson Street side to enhance the area. She stated this is not a privacy fence and would welcome Council's approval of the fence. It will be professionally installed. The location of the fence would be from the right of way, approximately 180 feet mainly where the plantings are located. Mayor Bayless inquired if they knew where the property line was located. Mrs. McCall replied the Committee would be willing to have it surveyed. She thinks the City employees could help but if a survey is needed, they will get it. Council Member Martin asked if markers have been located and was advised one has been found. Ms. Robin Hewitt said a survey should be available from an adjoining property owner.

Mr. Blanton said he had spoken with the property owner. The owner is not in favor of the fence and the Manager does not think he will assist with providing his survey. The Manager feels a survey should be completed. Mr. Martin motioned to allow the fence contingent on a survey. Council Member McQueen offered the second and all approved.

Mr. Bayless asked for fence setbacks from property lines. Gail Strickland advised the Ordinance does not require a setback but the City strongly urges citizens to install off the property line. Mr. McQueen explained the Committee should go to City Hall for a permit. Council Member Lindsey suggested they try to locate the surveyor of the adjoining property. If they can, the survey will be cheaper.

Ms. Robin Hewitt addressed Council in regards to revising the City's Ordinance to allow for chickens in the City limits. She stated other larger urban cities allow poultry within the City limits. The City has an Ordinance that does not allow chickens. Ms. Hewitt gave reasons for having chickens. She stated they are natural pest control, provide fresh eggs, are non-genetically modified, provide the best compost, make good pets, provide free fertilizer, cut down on food waste, are good weed control, are a good source of therapy, are a great educational tool for

children, are a cheap hobby and entertaining. She has spoken with the State Cooperative Office and suggested if the City allows chickens they should regulate the number based on square footage, require a coup, not allow roosters, have setbacks from neighbors, not allow selling or butchering, and only be allowed as a hobby. Council Member Buie suggested Council discuss it at the Budget Session. Several residents have voiced the same interest in having chickens to him. Council Member Lindsey asked Ms. Hewitt to give the City Manager the information she had gathered.

Mr. Bill Hoyle spoke to Council. He has purchased the house at the corner of Entwistle and Hylan. He voiced complaints in regards to the speed limit on Main Street. He would like to see the speed limit lowered to 25 mph. Mr. Blanton advised he had spoken with Mr. Hoyle and the City may be able to lobby NCDOT to lower the speed limit. The Mayor reported a previous attempt was not successful. Mr. Hoyle stated he watches the traffic from his porch and it is worse at night with many drivers not stopping at the stop signs. The Mayor explained that some streets are City and others are State. Mr. Hoyle said he has witnessed numerous wrecks and a speed limit lowered to 25 mph could be helpful. Council Member McQueen advised the State will investigate but many times they do not make changes. The home owner also voiced concern with speeding school buses. Mr. Bayless stated the Police Department is working on it. Mr. Hoyle responded they are just as bad as the residents. The City Manager will look into the matter.

6. Quasi –judicial Hearing – ESA Solar Special Use

City Manager Jonathan Blanton reported ESA Hamlet NC, LLC has requested a continuance of the Public Hearing for its pending Special Use Permit application. He reported Council would need to open the Public Hearing and then motion for the continuance. Council Members Buie and Martin provided the motion and second to open the Public Hearing. All approved. The motion and second to grant the continuance was given by Council Members Buie and Martin. The vote passed 4-0.

7. Friends of the Library Presentation

Mrs. Jane McCall with Friends of the Library spoke to Council during Comments from Attendees

At this time, Mayor Bayless recognized Chuck Cobb, now President of the Seaboard Festival and asked if he would like to make any comments. Mr. Cobb reported the Committee has a new Board of Directors. He advised the Festival had been a showcase for Hamlet and Richmond County for 30 plus years. He advised they are looking for additional volunteers. The Mayor stated the City would help as they can. Council Member Lindsey stated he was the Administrator of the Seaboard Festival Facebook and webpage. He said he would provide the information needed to change the Administrator and offered to help as he could. Mr. Cobb wants to sustain the success of the festival.

8. Approval to Advertise Delinquent Taxes

Council Member Buie made a motion to approve the advertising of the delinquent taxes. Council Member Lindsey provided the second. All approved. The Mayor reported the total amount owed as of March 8, 2018 was \$122,944.25. The Manager reported the last day to pay and have your name removed from the list is Monday, April 23rd. Council Member McQueen inquired on last year's collection rate and Finance Officer Jill Dickens stated it was consistent with previous years.

9. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member Buie made a motion to approve the tax releases as presented. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote passed 4-0. The Mayor reported the amount of tax releases as \$205.80.

Other Business

10. City Manager's Report

The Manager reported the City's 9-10 and 11-12-year-old basketball teams are advancing to State tournaments and offered congratulations to them. He also announced bid packets are available for the demolition of 302 W Hamlet through March 29th. Mr. Blanton also advised the City will be closed March 30th for Good Friday and informed Council the Purple Heart Signs have been delivered. He also thanked those that spoke during Comments from Attendees and stated the City is glad to have citizens participate in the meetings.

11. Comments of Council

Council Member McQueen congratulated Mr. Cobb for his election as President of the Seaboard Festival Committee and stated volunteers are needed. He also said he was glad to have citizens voice their concerns. Mr. McQueen stated the City is working hard with all they have. It is important for the citizens to know the City is doing what they need to do. He welcomed the citizens to come to the budget meetings.

Council Member Lindsey said he saw in the check register that Rick's Catering from Laurinburg was used at the Chamber event funded by the City. He would prefer the City use a local caterer when City funds are used. Mr. Blanton reported Mrs. Thornsby reached out to 2 caterers in Hamlet but they were not available. Mr. Cobb stated he is on the Chamber Board. When they have events, they solicit bids from their members and Rick's Catering is a member. The Mayor suggested they try Hamlet businesses first.

Mr. Lindsey also stated the number of water customers on automatic draft in July was 18%. He said if the City could offer an incentive to get the draft numbers higher, it would lower the number of customers the employees wait on and lessen the employee's burden. With the water bill capability now, the City can push the availability of the drafts.

Also noted by Mr. Lindsey was the special meeting for the playground equipment was not advertised on the City's webpage and that is a violation of the State law. He said in the future we need to do so. Mr. Lindsey asked if Council needed to go back and re-vote. He made reference to the A&P Building purchase when a vote was not made and Council had to revisit the issue and vote at a later date. Council Member McQueen inquired if the notice has to be on the website. The Manager responded Mr. Lindsey gave him a copy of the Statute on the day of the meeting. It was placed on the City's Facebook page and advertised in the newspaper, but the IT Director was not available when the meeting was scheduled. The Manager will check if there are any consequences or if Council needs to vote again.

Council Member Lindsey stated he needed to come in and discuss an issue, a law that he needs

research on. He is aware he is not to contact the Attorney. It is regarding a statement that was made about a penalty for someone not doing something. He advised he would come in to see the City Manager to discuss it. He also offered condolences to Council McQueen's loss of his mother-in-law.

Mr. Lindsey inquired if another budget meeting is needed before the one scheduled in April. The Manager responded the draft budget will include the information discussed at the previous budget meeting. Mr. Blanton thinks the current timeframe is good.

Council Member Buie expressed his appreciation to the citizens for coming in to voice their concerns. He said the City is working on a lot of things with little money. Council hopes to fund the Police Department and use outside sources to solve the problems. He thanked the Police Department for what they are doing

12. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless thanked the citizens that came to the meeting and thanked public works for their work.

13. Motion to go into Closed Session.

Item 13 was removed from the Agenda.

13. Motion to Adjourn

At approximately 8:23pm, Council Members Buie and Lindsey made motions to adjourn. The vote was 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Strickland
City Clerk