

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET REVIEW MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2018
3:00 PM**

MINUTES

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro-Tem	Johnathan Buie joined at 3:17 pm
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Wendy Massagee
Council Member	David Lindsey

Staff Present:

City Manager	Jonathan Blanton
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
Zoning	Gail Strickland
Police Chief	Scott Waters
Police Detective	Richard Jordan

Others Present: Amber Denny, Pamela Simmons, Renee Cerzybowski, and Chuck Craven with The Richmond Observer. Chris Carroll, RC Daily Journal Reporter, entered at 3:36 pm.

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order.

2. Discussion of the Appointment of City Clerk and Oath of Office.

Mayor Bayless asked to move the Oath of the City Clerk to the 7 pm meeting, Council Member Jesse McQueen made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented with the amendment. Council Member Eddie Martin provided the second. All approved the Agenda. Council Member Eddie Martin made the motion to accept the Manager's recommendation to appoint Gail Strickland as City Clerk. Council Member David Lindsey provided the second. The vote was unanimous.

3. Review of Mid-Year Financials.

Manager Jonathan Blanton noted in years past, Council would review the yearly budget to make additional purchases as funds allowed. This year, Council did budget to take \$725,000.00 from the Fund Balance; \$52,000 was taken out of the General Fund Balance. Based on that information, it is his recommendation to not pursue any new purchases at this time. He noted Council would have Budget Amendments at the regular meeting to discuss and approve. Mr. McQueen asked if items in the 2017-18 budget have been purchased. The Manager and Finance Officer Jill Dickens confirmed several large ticket items have been purchased.

The Mayor inquired on the Fund Balance spent for this year. The Manager explained that information is not available from the auditor at this point. He further explained he does not see any red flags at this point in the yearly budget but suggested Council wait on additional expenditures. The Mayor inquired if Council knew of any imminent needs at this time. None were given.

Council briefly discussed some of the Agenda items. Council Member McQueen inquired on the safety of the pier at City Lake. Mr. Blanton responded some repairs have taken place and there is no safety issue. Council Member Lindsey inquired if an estimate had been obtained. The City Manager stated \$15,000.00 - \$20,000.00.

Mr. Lindsey asked for the price to repair the basketball courts at South Hamlet. The Manager stated the cheap fix to resurface only was around \$3,000.00. Mr. Lindsey said the courts need more than resurfacing.

Council Member Lindsey asked if the Manager had prices for outsourcing Mary Love Cemetery. Mr. Blanton responded that if Council wanted to outsource, the City can seek bids. Currently, the City has 2 cemetery employees and the Horticulture Department goes through to complete routine work. Public Works Director, Billy Stubbs, had brought the idea to the Manager's attention.

The Mayor suggested Council go back to the Agenda and discuss each item one at the time.

4. Discussion of Outstanding Projects for 2017 – 2018.

Background Checks for Parks and Recreation Coaches.

The Manager provided a cost of \$32.00 for each back-ground check and noted the City has approximately 50 volunteers. He stated Rockingham and other similar sized municipalities do not require the background checks. Councilman Buie has voiced concern. The Mayor suggested tabling the matter until Council Member Buie was in attendance.

New Entrance Signs to City.

The Manager stated the entrance signs can be put in the 2018-19 budget. Council had discussed 3 signs previously but money was shifted to the park and the signs were put on hold. The Mayor requested the Manager have designs available at the budget discussions.

The Future of the Museum Being Closed on Mondays.

Council Member McQueen had concerns with the hours of the Depot. Council had agreed last February for the Museum to close on Mondays, allowing the Curator an opportunity for cataloging and paperwork. Mr. Blanton has spoken with the Depot Board. They would like to see the exhibits open on Monday but have no problem that tours are not available. Council Member McQueen suggested opening the museum on Saturdays. The Manager explained volunteers operate the Museum on Saturdays and Sundays from 1pm – 5pm. Council Member Massagee stated Mrs. Thornsbury does provide tours for groups on Mondays if they call in advance. She also feels the Curator needs time for paperwork and meetings with persons making donations. Mr. McQueen noted the City may need to adjust employee schedules so they can be at the Museum on the weekends. They could have a day off during the week and be available on

weekends when more people would visit. He stated he appreciated the volunteers but thinks it is something Council should look at in the upcoming budget. Mr. Blanton will check the volunteers' schedules.

Outsourcing the Upkeep of Mary Love Cemetery.

Mr. Blanton advised as long as he has consensus of Council, he can pursue obtaining bids. The Mayor questioned what had changed. At one point the City had one cemetery employee and now there are two. The Manager would like to explore the option of outsourcing. Council Member Lindsey stated he did not see a problem with getting prices. Mayor Bayless inquired on vandalism in the cemetery. The Manager and Police Chief both indicated they were not aware of any recent incidents. The Mayor also commented that City crews do not have the equipment to get the tombstones back in place. Mr. Blanton responded it is not the City's responsibility to reset the stones. He also stated he would get prices together to contrast the price of outsourcing the upkeep.

Hamlet Becoming a Purple Heart City.

The City Manager stated the cost is \$300.00. A gentleman addressed Council last August on the matter. Council Member Eddie Martin made the motion for Hamlet to become a Purple Heart City. Mr. McQueen provided a second and all approved. The Manager will get any papers or formalities together that may be needed.

The Future of the Hospital Column outside the Tornado Building.

The Mayor inquired if the column was one of the ones previously stored at the Lion's Club. A picture shown by the Manager confirmed it was. Council Member McQueen suggested getting rid of it if it had no value or no one wanted it. Council Member Lindsey said Bobby Moser removed the columns when the hospital was taken down. He also advised there are smaller ones at the Depot. Council Member Martin suggested leaving the columns alone unless they were bothering someone.

At 3:17 pm, Council Member Johnathan Buie entered the meeting.

Accepting the Property of the Woman's Club.

The City Manager advised this is the piece of property at the triangle that the City keeps up. He has spoken with the Woman's Club and they were not aware they owned it. The location of the property was described as the Rex Howell Park across from Convenience Corner. Council Member Lindsey stated it was tax exempt property and it was his suggestion to acquire the property if they were keeping it up. The City could then do anything on the property without any problems. Council Member Massagee suggested the property should be in the City's name if they maintain it. Council Member Martin feels the Woman's Club should pay for the deed. It was determined the cost of the deed would be around \$100.00. Council Member McQueen made the motion to accept the property and Council Member Buie gave the second. All approved.

Continued Discussion of Background Checks for Coaches.

The Mayor asked Council to revisit the background checks since Council Member Buie had joined the meeting. Mr. Buie explained he had parents inquire on one of the coaches. If background checks are conducted, the City is safe. The Manager provided the cost of \$32.00 for a background check and the number of volunteers is approximately 50. Mr. Buie wants the checks for the head coach, whoever is primarily involved with the team, not each assistant and not each year. The Manager confirmed the back-ground checks are for head coaches of parks and recreation only, no other volunteers. Council Member Lindsey inquired who would do the back-ground checks. Mr. Blanton responded the Human Resources Department would be in charge. Council Member McQueen added some companies do them. Council Member Lindsey suggested the Manager do more research and bring it back to Council. Mr. McQueen added the City needs a policy, regulations on what would prevent someone from coaching. Mr. Blanton will get prices of outsourcing and inquire if companies have a flat fee.

Funding of the Restoration of the Dock at City Lake.

The City Manager feels the pier is the original pier. It has had problems with boards coming off and vandalism as well. The City has made minor repairs, a quick fix to the problem. He has an estimate from 6 months ago of \$15,000 - \$20,000 to make the repairs. Council does not think that includes the pilings. Mr. Blanton will confirm with Doc Sylvain. Council Member Lindsey suggested they bring in someone to inspect and get prices.

Selling Various, Random Pieces of Property that the City has Acquired Over the Years.

Mr. Blanton announced a suggestion was made last year to compile a list of City owned properties for surplus. Council Member Wendy Massagee agreed to help. The Mayor inquired if Habitat would have a use for the properties; it would bring in taxes. The Manager will compile a list and bring to Council.

Repaving South Hamlet Courts.

Mayor Bayless inquired if South Hamlet was the only courts in need of repairs. Council Member Buie described the courts as horrible, currently a rock court. Council Member Lindsey stated Council should plan to completely rebuild the courts. He asked Gail Strickland about the McFarland property located next to the existing courts. She was not aware if the deed and title were cleared. Council Member Lindsey said if the City has ownership or could acquire through a quit claim deed, they could build a new court and let the existing serve as parking. The property is approximately 100 ft. x 150 ft. It would be more visible and safer. He suggested checking with Dobbins Heights for the cost of their recently built courts and asked the Manager to get costs and bring back to Council. Council Member McQueen suggested the City also look at the unopened portion of Columbia Avenue, located near the courts.

Discussion of Budget Work Session.

The Manager asked Council in regards to Budget Planning Workshops if they wanted him to compile a list of capital outlay projects to bring to them or if they wanted to meet with the Department Heads individually. It was decided Council would meet with the Department Heads individually for Capital projects over \$5,000.00. The first Budget Work Session was scheduled for March 2, 2018 at 8:30am.

Mayor's Comments – Infrastructure.

The Mayor stated big industry will not look at the City because of sewer capacity. He has been told there is a way to increase the capacity at the Waste Water Treatment Plant to 2 million gallons at a reasonable price. He asked the Manager to look into the matter and bring information back to Council. Mr. Blanton reported the WWTP will need a belt press. Mayor Bayless said he has mentioned to Robert Brown at the Water Plant that he needs to bring to Council the things that will be problems for next year. He has relayed the message to Mr. Dunn at the WWTP but Mr. Dunn is retiring. The City is currently making repairs as they occur. The Manager explained the City can get to the 2-million-gallon capacity with a belt press. He has spoken with Mr. Dunn who provided a price of a couple hundred thousand dollars. Mr. Blanton has researched grant funds for the project but the City is not eligible because of low water and sewer rates. To get to the State median would be a significant increase to water and sewer customers.

The Mayor asked Finance Officer Jill Dickens if the City was in good shape on the Enterprise Fund. Ms. Dickens stated \$169,000.00 was taken out of the Enterprise Fund Balance this past year. She also said the City is slowly falling behind in that fund but putting money back in the General Fund. Mayor Bayless pointed out one reason for the increase in Enterprise spending is the number of water leaks. Council Member McQueen also stated the City changed some items from the General Fund to Enterprise. Ms. Dickens responded it has now shifted and they may need to re-evaluate.

Mr. McQueen stated Council has talked for years that capacity could not be increased at the WWTP and asked how it is possible now. Mr. Blanton explained the regulations have changed and the City can put more discharge in the creek. He has a letter that says discharge can be up to 2 million gallons with some restrictions. He also mentioned the City has payments on the existing plant until 2020.

Council Member Lindsey asked if the Manager had designated a replacement for Mr. Dunn. The Manager stated the job was advertised internally. He has received 2 applications and has interviews scheduled.

Mayor Bayless stated the City discussed the belt press several years ago but did not pursue the matter. Mr. Blanton said the press would eliminate hauling. He will try to get a turn-key cost for Council.

Other Council Concerns.

Council Member McQueen asked the Police Chief, when preparing for the Budget, to bring to Council tangible strategies for the recent gang activity that Council can help the Police Department with. He stated if the City cannot hire additional employees, they may be able to authorize overtime. He wants the Chief to get with his department and bring ideas back to Council.

Council Member Massagee asked to discuss an item from the previous month. She stated when Council came from closed session, they agreed to pay the Manager \$3200.00 and change. She said this was where Council had authorized the Mayor to extend employment to Mr. Blanton and the ability to offer moving expenses, if needed. Mrs. Massagee said the Manager took the offer and then found out later they were willing to pay more. She continued by saying a broken lease is not a deductible expense and she saw a check was voided. Mr. Blanton replied the check was not voided, it was processed through payroll and taxes were taken out. Council Member Massagee responded it was done as a bonus and not a reimbursement to which the Manager stated it was done through payroll. Mrs. Massagee asked if it was a bonus and not a reimbursement. Mr. Blanton stated Council agreed to the reimbursement and it was not a bonus per se. Councilman McQueen asked if that was the way it had to be done for taxes. Jill Dickens responded it was taxed as a bonus would be and had to run through payroll. Mr. McQueen asked if it was done the right way to which Ms. Dickens confirmed it was; they had looked into the matter. Council Member Massagee stated it was more of a bonus.

5. Adjournment.

At 3:37 pm, Council Members McQueen and Martin made a motion and second to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail M. Strickland
City Clerk