

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 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
Council Member	Wendy Massagee

Staff Present:

City Manager	Jonathan Blanton
City Attorney	TC Morphis
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
IT	Zach Garner
Police Officer	Chad Haywood
Public Works Director	Billy Stubbs

Others Present: Pastor David Amon, Christine Carroll with RC Daily Journal, Amy Guinn with Richmond Observer, Chuck Craven with Richmond Observer, Donna Wright, Linda Bayless, Tim Nevenger, Kay Cavendish, Don Norton, Teresa Hardee, Denise Cozart, Janet Robertson, and Gerald Potoka III.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order.

2. Invocation

Pastor David Amon of Fellowship Methodist Church offered the opening prayer.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Council Members Buie and Lindsey motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes to the March 13, 2018 Regular Monthly Meeting were approved by motions of Council Members Buie and Martin. The motion carried.

5. Comments from Attendees

Ms. Teresa Hardee addressed Council explaining she had an issue with the Water Department last week. They mistakenly cut her water off while she was on vacation. She stated she understood people make mistakes but she had to go to the bank and had to take time off work to get the matter resolved. Ms. Hardee said the City should have red flags in place to notify

accounts that have not been past due before. This would allow the water department employees to check accounts before their water is cut off. She was also upset that the City Manager came to the Water Department but did not offer an apology and felt the City should have had cash or a check for her when she came to City Hall. Mr. Blanton explained he felt Ms. Dickens had the matter under control. He offered his apology at the meeting. Council Member Buie responded that he supports what Ms. Hardee is saying but he will not allow her to attack the City Manager. Ms. Dickens explained the software does not currently have a way of notifying first time cut offs but she will check with the Software Company to see if something can be implemented. She also explained the City cannot operate in cash and Ms. Hardee's son had advised a credit to the account was fine.

New Business

6. Public Hearing – Pee Dee Lumber Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Richmond County Emergency Services provided the City with the Pee Dee Lumber Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The floor was opened for a Public Hearing. Donna Wright, Emergency Management Director, explained FEMA requires the plan to be updated every 5 years to be eligible for reimbursements. A grant was secured for the updated Hazard Plan and a Contractor secured for assistance. Mayor Bayless asked for questions or comments. When none were received, the Public Hearing was closed.

7. Adoption of Resolution 2018-01 – Pee Dee Lumber Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Council Member Buie made the motion to adopt the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Council Member Lindsey offered the second. The motion was approved by a vote of 5-0.

8. Lumber River Council of Governments Representative.

Janet Robertson, liaison for the LRCOG addressed Council. She provided leaflets on the Community and Economic Services and Work Force Development offered by the Council of Governments. She reported they were hosting an Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior Program at the Cole Auditorium on Thursday. Also reported was a Meeting to prioritize transportation projects in Richmond County on April 19th. The meeting will be at Rockingham City Hall. Council Member Buie, who serves as the City's Representative on the LRCOG, listed numerous activities and financial investments provided by the organization.

9. Mayoral Arbor Day Proclamation.

The Mayor read a Proclamation announcing April 13, 2018 as Arbor Day in the City of Hamlet. The Mayor urged citizens to support efforts to protect our trees and woodlands and to plant and care for trees to promote the well-being of this and future generations.

10. Appointment to the Hamlet Depot Board.

The Depot Board submitted an application for appointment to their Board. Council Member Buie made a motion to appoint Lawrence Hannahan to the Board. Council Member Martin provided the second and all approved.

11. Approval of Tax Releases. Council Members Buie and Massagee made the motion and second to approve the tax releases presented. The vote was unanimous.

Other Business

10. City Manager's Report

The Manager reported the City is hiring for 3 positions: a driver for the WWTP, a Fire Fighter Paramedic and a Firefighter EMT. He also announced Seaboard Festival Applications are available at City Hall and on the City's website. The Committee is having some issues with their website but hope to have it up shortly. Mr. Blanton reminded the citizens the P&Z Board is seeking applicants for their Board. Applications are available at City Hall. Lastly, the Manager reported the Budget Message will be at the May meeting for Council's Consideration.

11. Comments of Council

Council Member Lindsey asked for clarification on the due dates for water bills. Ms. Dickens responded bills are due on the 15th and past due after the 20th. Water is cut off 10 days later. Mr. Lindsey inquired if the City has 500 cut offs each month. Council Member McQueen stated the City collects over \$100,000.00 annually in late fees. Mr. McQueen asked what could be done to prevent the situations such as Ms. Hardee's and when partial online payments are made by mistake. Ms. Dickens explained water customers are not cut off if the balance is less than \$5.00. The Water Department is discussing ways to handle the situation, both in house and possibly with software. They do not have a way to manually check accounts and rely on the meter readers who sometimes knock on doors to notify of the cutoffs. The Mayor inquired if the water bills have a barcode. Ms. Dickens replied they do not, but they can look into it.

Council Member Lindsey reminded the public the election is coming up May 8th with early voting beginning April 19th – May 5th and encouraged people to vote.

Mr. Lindsey asked Attorney Morphis for clarification on a statement that was made in a previous meeting. It was said it is illegal to leave a meeting and you could be arrested for doing so. Council Member McQueen and City Manager Jonathan Blanton stated it was a closed session meeting. The Attorney inquired if the Board wanted his response in the open meeting or wait until closed session to discuss. It was consensus of Council to hear the Attorney's response in the open meeting. Mr. Morphis explained it is not illegal to leave a meeting and you cannot be arrested. The only repercussion is if you leave a meeting, without being excused, your vote counts as an affirmative, except in cases of zoning where Council is an abstention.

Council Member Martin provided a public service message. Robbie Taylor, former Rockingham Police Officer and brother of recently retired Hamlet Police Officer Stevie Taylor, is undergoing serious heart issues. He is going to Charlotte to prepare for a mechanical heart and will need the prayers and thoughts of the community. He announced a fund raiser is planned for April 21st for him and his family travelling back and forth. Information will be available in the local media. He encouraged people to help by participating in the fund raisers.

Council Member Buie referred to an issue discussed at the last Council meeting where it was brought up that Rick's Catering had catered an event sponsored by the City. He was not sure why it was brought up because Council voted in November for Rick's Catering to do the afterhours event with the Chamber and there was no rebuttal.

He thanked the Manager and Staff for the leg work to compile the budget. He expressed the City has experienced lots of positives in the years he has been on the Board. He recognized Gerald Potoka for attending the meeting, stating the young people were the future.

12. Mayor's Comments

The Mayor commented about the Seaboard Festival. Mr. Chuck Cobb is President and has 8 people on the committee and others interested. He recognized Staff for their work on the budget. He explained the Budget is difficult at times for Council and Staff. The City does the best it can with what it has. The City projects an amount every year to use from the fund balance. They never use the budgeted amount, but it is available for emergencies. He stated some items had to be cut. The Mayor thanked Mr. Blanton and Mr. Stubbs for the work on the streets. He advised most of the potholes have been repaired but asked the public to notify the City of any remaining ones. He also advised the City does pick up trash put out by the road, but they cannot pick it up every week.

Council Member Buie provided an address on Raleigh Street to Gail Strickland for code enforcement issues.

- 12. Motion to go into Closed Session.** At 7:41 pm, Council Members Buie and Martin made a motion and second to go into Closed Session per NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3) (5) for attorney-client privilege and contract discussion.

At 8:29 pm, Council returned to Open Session. No motions were made in Closed Session.

13. Motion to Adjourn

At approximately 8:30 pm, Council Members Buie and Martin made motions to adjourn. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Strickland
City Clerk