

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL BUDGET REVIEW MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2019
5:30 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro-Tem	Johnathan Buie
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Wendy Massagee
Council Member	Jesse McQueen

Staff Present:

City Manager	Jonathan Blanton
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
Public Works Director	Billy Stubbs

Others Present: Jasmine Hager with the Richmond County Daily Journal

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order. Council Member Buie motioned to accept the Agenda as presented. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

2. Review of Budget vs. Actual

The City Manager reported the Budget is where it needs to be; he does not see any financial issues at this time. He called attention to several items listed on the Agenda that Council postponed purchasing in May 2018.

3. Items for Consideration

A. Review of Postponed Expenditures from the initial 2018-19 Budget

- **Items for the Police Department**
Mr. Blanton suggested Council wait on reviewing the Police Department items until a new Chief is appointed.
- **Increase in Demolition Cost**
The Manager commented that any upcoming demolitions could be presented to Council on a case by case basis. Mayor Bayless inquired on 2 properties owned by Richmond County that were shown on the Burned Structure List. He asked Staff to reach out to the County for their plans with the properties. Gail Strickland advised the County acquired them through foreclosure. Mr. Blanton reported the Fire Department will burn the 405 Cheraw Rd. property on Feb. 16th but they did not see any training value in the other structures on the List.
- **Car for City Hall**

Council Member Buie stated the vehicle for City Hall needed to be replaced. Council Member McQueen inquired on the use of the vehicle. The Manager answered it is used for travel as well as daily trips to the bank and code enforcement. Mr. Billy Stubbs added the vehicle would be used by other Departments taking training. Council Member Massagee inquired if the City could reimburse employees for use of their personal vehicles. Mrs. Strickland offered safety concerns when Staff conducts code inspections in personal vehicles. Mr. Blanton offered for City employees and Council to use the City Manager's car. Council Member Martin replied no one should use the Manager's car. Mr. Buie motioned to purchase a vehicle for Administration and Mr. Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

- **New Entrance Signs**

Mayor Bayless inquired on the status of the Entrance Signs to the City. Mr. Blanton reported designs were presented to Council previously but they were not acceptable so the project was put on hold. He advised he could reach out to TRG Sign Company for new ideas. Council agreed they did not want metal signs; they want composite signs similar to the City of Rockingham and the County so they will all have the same design.

- **Pick-up Truck for Fire Department**

The City Manager stated the Fire Department was fine at this time.

B. Potential Revised Retiree Insurance Benefits –

The City Manager stated the Auditor discussed OPED (Other Post-Employment Benefits) at the December 2018 Meeting and gave skewed numbers so he wanted to clarify the numbers for Council. Mr. Blanton reported each year the City pays \$105,000.00 in retiree insurance benefits, covering people for life based on the number of years employed. The City pays a percentage of the current employee premium rate as follows: 10-15 years of service 25%; 15-20 years 50%; 20-25 years 75% and 25 or more years 100%. Mayor Bayless asked if the City was paying the full insurance rate once an employee was on Medicare or paying for a Supplement. It was determined the City pays for a Supplement to cover the portion Medicare does not pay. The Mayor questioned if the City was paying medical premiums for retirees up to the age of Medicare and the Manager confirmed. The Manager recommended the City amend the policy that with 30 years of service and 20 years of consecutive service to the City, the City would provide 100% healthcare benefits up to 5 years or until the retiree reached Medicare Age. The changes would be applicable to future hires, not current employees or retirees. Council Member McQueen inquired on the company used for the Supplement Policy and Mr. Blanton responded the Supplement is through the City's Insurance Company. Mr. Bayless suggested the City look at other companies for comparison. A suggestion of 30 years with 25 years of consecutive service to the City was suggested by Council Member McQueen, noting the current policy has 25 years for 100% payment by the City. Council Member Massagee agreed with 25 years of consecutive service with Hamlet. Mr. McQueen then said he did not have a problem with requiring 30 years of service for the benefit. Council Member Buie asked if the City could offer a reduction for 25 years of consecutive service, possibly 85%, and 100% for 30 years. The consensus of Council was 100% for 30 years and 85% for 25 years. Mr. Blanton reported he would have the information to discuss at the Budget Work Session so the changes would take effect July 1st.

C. Reimbursement of \$24,000.00 to the Rescue Squad

The City Manager explained in 2017 the City received a check made payable to Hamlet Fire and EMS for \$12,000.00 that was deposited in the City's checking account. He also stated the same thing happened in 2013. The money is from the County as a stipend for EMS. The Rescue Squad brought the matter to his and the Mayor's attention and requested a reimbursement. The City Manager advised the reimbursement would require a budget amendment. It was the consensus of Council to pay the \$24,000.00 to EMS.

4. **Additional Items Discussed**

Mayor Bayless opened the floor for additional topics of discussion. Council Member Martin discussed the relinquishment of the City's ETJ jurisdiction. The City Manager reported it is the trend with other municipalities. The change would reduce the City's time and expense with code enforcement matters. The ETJ is of no benefit revenue wise to the City but does serve as a buffer for zoning uses. Also stated was annexations are no longer permitted for towns. He informed Council a Public Hearing would be required or the matter could go the Planning Board and then a Public Hearing. Council expressed concern for the properties located on the borders of the City limits. Council Member McQueen suggested the Manager contact the municipalities that have made the changes. Council Member Massagee stated she would like to have the Planning Board's input. The Mayor inquired on the doughnut holes in the City, the areas located within the corporate limits that are not in the City limits. Mr. Blanton stated the City may not want to relinquish all the properties. It was the consensus of Council to carry the matter to the Planning Board.

The City Manager discussed a request from Richmond County asking the City of Hamlet to forego their Fourth of July Fireworks with the announcement of the Fireworks Display at the Racetrack. Council Member McQueen stated the new business has invested a great deal of money and everyone should work together. He has no problem with a countywide-fireworks show. Council Member Martin suggested the City have an agreement in case they decided not to proceed. He also stated the City of Rockingham was making a sizeable contribution to the event. He suggested the City forego their event and not compete with them. Council Member Massagee agreed to show community spirit. It was consensus of Council to forego the City of Hamlet Fourth of July Fireworks.

Mayor Bayless asked Public Works Director Billy Stubbs about the number of broken trashcans around the City. Mr. Stubbs explained the lifespan of a can is 5-7 years. The City orders 125 each year but with 3000 cans in use, all broken cans cannot be replaced. They may need to look at increasing the number ordered.

Council Member Buie advised the South Hamlet Field needs attention. He stated an Adult League is paying \$500.00 per season to use the field and suggested the City get prices to have the area of play sodded or reseeded.

Mayor Bayless inquired on street repairs. Mr. Stubbs advised they will be obtaining quotes to resurface a few blocks soon and hope to get new quotes from the company used to pave the South Hamlet basketball court. He advised patching has been slow due to the rain. The speed

bump on Charlotte Street was discussed and determined it is there due to a previous accident.

The Mayor reported one of NCDOT's long term goals is to put new sidewalks on Spring St.

Council Member McQueen advised he has been asked for the City to have a community wide cleanup day. He suggested having the Public Works Department work in the determined area on Friday and then volunteers help on Saturday. Council Member Buie suggested they may be able to get a sponsorship from local businesses for snacks. The Mayor said in the past the only people that showed up for clean-up days were Council and employees.

Mr. McQueen also expressed concern for the fence at Memorial Park along Hwy 177 stating the black fabric is not fitted properly and should be adjusted correctly or removed. He also would like to see the City plant 3 or 4 small trees on each side of Main St. either where the pavers are located or in large planters. Council Member Buie added the same should take place on Hamlet Avenue. Council Member Massagee raised the issues of damage to sidewalks and watering the trees.

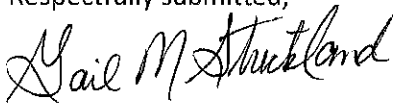
Mayor Bayless reported the City continues to have an issue with speeders on Main St.

The City Manager asked Council to set a date for the Budget Planning Meeting and suggested Council use the same format as the past. The date of Friday, March 8th was set beginning at 8:30 am with Council breaking for lunch and then returning for the afternoon session.

5. Adjournment of Meeting

AT 6:30 pm Council Members Buie and Martin motioned to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland
City Clerk

