

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
BUDGET WORK SESSION
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019
8:30 AM
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
Finance Officer:	Jill Dickens
City Clerk:	Gail Strickland
Public Works Director:	Billy Stubbs
Building Maintenance:	Doc Sylvain joined the meeting at 9:00 am
Water Plant Supervisor:	Robert Brown joined the meeting at 10:00 am
WWTP Supervisor:	Darrell Lowery joined the meeting at 10:00 am
P&R Director:	Maurice McLaurin joined the meeting at 11:10 am

Others Present: Jasmine Hager joined the meeting at 8:40 am

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

1. Adoption of Agenda

Council Member Buie motioned to adopt the Agenda as presented. Council Member McQueen provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

2. Consideration of the Budget Requests for the 2019/2020 Budget

a. Comments of Council for 2019/2020 Projects

Council wished to give their comments at the conclusion of the Departments' requests. City Manager Jonathan Blanton reported the budget is coming along well; it is where it needs to be. He advised there will be 2 rounds of Budget Amendments for Council's consideration at later dates. The Manager stated the requests from the Department Heads are for Capital Outlay Items for \$5,000.00 or more.

b. Administration/Code Enforcement/Miscellaneous

a. New Signs for the City of Hamlet - (4) \$60,000.00

The Manager reported, after the last Council Meeting, he met with TRG Signs to obtain quotes for signs similar to Rockingham's. Steve Davis has provided a quote of \$60,000.00 for 4 signs. They can purchase 2 now for \$30,000.00 and the price will be locked in for 2 additional signs in the next fiscal year. The City can customize the signs

with text, font and color. Mr. Blanton will check with TRG for the required down payment since the time frame between order and installation is roughly 6 months. Council discussed locations for the signs on the main thoroughfares. Mr. Blanton suggested the placement of a sign at the Women's Club property. The Manager will budget \$30,000.00 for next year and bring a \$30,000 Budget Amendment in March.

b. Increase in Yearly Demolition - \$25,000.00

Mr. Blanton advised Council discussed increasing the demolition budget last year but kept it at \$25,000.00 which allows the City to remove 2-3 houses each year. He would like to see 2-3 more demolished. The Manager will tentatively put \$50,000.00 for demolition. Mayor Bayless inquired on 2 burned structures owned by the County. The Manager answered they were obtained in foreclosures and Gail Strickland added the County has advised they plan to sell the properties at auction.

c. Discussion of Cost of Living Adjustment

The City Manager stated he wanted to gauge Council on a Cost of Living Adjustment for the employees. Last year an increase was not given; the prior year 2% was given. Mr. Blanton gave the cost of annual employee salaries as \$3.5 million. This year the City will have a savings of \$150,000.00 with the dispatcher positions gone. A 3% increase would cost the City \$3,486,000.00 which is a decrease from the current year. A 3-1/2% increase would require \$3,502,000.00. He would like to see money set aside for a new position in the Police Department. Mayor Bayless asked if the City had received the Health Insurance quotes. Mr. Blanton replied not at this time, but last year the premiums increased by 2%. Council Member McQueen stated it is cheaper to keep employees by giving raises than to train new employees. Council Member Martin was in favor of the 3% raise.

c. Parks and Recreation/Senior Center/Depot

a. Pick-up Truck for Parks and Recreation - (1) \$15,000

Mr. Blanton discussed the purchase of a vehicle for the Parks and Recreation Director. He currently has an older Ford Ranger. His suggestion was to get something newer but not necessarily a new vehicle. Council Members Martin, Buie and McQueen agreed a new vehicle was needed. Mr. McQueen said a full-size truck may be cheaper than a smaller one. Public Works Director, Billy Stubbs, reported his truck was purchased for \$11,000.00 and he felt they could find something comparable.

b. Repaving of Senior Center Parking Lot - \$26,000

The City Manager received quotes from Hudson Paving in the amount of \$50,000.00 - \$60,000.00 for the repaving. The estimate from Seven Lakes Paving was considerably cheaper. They gave an estimate of \$26,000.00 to repave the parking lot and curb. Mayor Bayless was in favor of the paving, stating someone may get hurt with the parking lot in its current condition. Mr. Blanton agreed, from a liability stand point, it is an issue.

Reconstruction of City Pier - \$56,000

Mr. Blanton explained Doc Sylvain has patched the pier significantly the past 2 years. He has received a quote of \$56,000.00 to take out the existing pier and replace it, but it would be shorter. Council Member Martin expressed concern of rebuilding a shorter

pier. If the pier is used for fishing it needs to stay the length it is now. After reviewing the drawings submitted by the contractor, it was determined the bid included a 6 ft. x 104 ft. pier. The length of the current pier is 125 ft. Council Member Massagee asked if any grants were available to help with the needed renovations. Mr. Blanton answered he reached out to Brian Collier with Foundations of the Carolinas. Mr. Collier took the request to his Board, but there was no interest in funding the project. Mrs. Massagee suggested applying for grants from the NC League of Municipalities or State grants. NC Wildlife was mentioned as a possible grant source. The Manager stated he will research grants and also reach out to the contractor for another proposal and inquire on the length. Council Members Martin and Buie suggested moving the pier closer to the Senior Center or the boat ramp near the Old VFW Building.

d. Fire Department

a. Air-Packs -\$32,000

Mayor Bayless explained the Fire Department is using air packs that are legal but not to the new standards. He said the East Rockingham Fire Department recently purchased new air packs with grant funds but explained the grants available for volunteer fire departments are not available for the City.

b. Resurfacing of the Rear Parking Lot - \$50,000

Mr. Blanton stated the City should be able to repave the parking lot for less than the Fire Department's quote of \$50,000.00. Council discussed using Enterprise Funds to pay for the resurfacing since the Water Department Drive-thru exit is the same parking lot. Finance Officer Jill Dickens will check with the Auditor to see if that is permissible. Council Member Martin suggested Council forego the paving at this time and increase the number of air-packs.

e. Public Works

a. Chlorine Scale and Feed Equipment (Water Plant) - \$11,000

The City Manager explained the Water Plant has to have the chlorine scale and feed equipment. It will more accurately show what is added with the electronic read. Another town has expressed interest in purchasing the old one.

b. Camera Pipe Inspection Tracer - \$9,248

Billy Stubbs explained the use of the equipment. It can be used for service lines to look for obstructions and collapsed lines. Council Member McQueen noted the use would prevent the number of holes dug in the streets. The equipment would show the problem within a few feet. Council Member Martin asked if the City has 1 now. Mr. Stubbs confirmed they do, but it is outdated. Mr. McQueen stated it would pay for itself with savings in digging.

c. Hydraulic Dump Trailer - \$15,702

Mr. Stubbs said the trailer is a leaf and limb trailer. The City purchased 2 trailers 5-6 years ago. They need something more dependable to replace one of the older ones. His Department has 2 that are 30 years old. They are used almost daily and have an issue with the axles.

d. Garbage Truck - \$155,000

While discussing a new garbage truck, Mr. Stubbs said the usual practice of the City is to get a new garbage truck when 1 is paid for. Jill Dickens stated the City has 1 more year to pay for the last purchased garbage truck. Mr. Stubbs explained he wanted to replace the 2010 truck, stating the cost to keep the truck up may exceed the payment. Mr. Blanton said he would tentatively put the cost of the garbage truck in the budget. Council Member Buie expressed concern with the City picking up garbage cans that are not City issued. He discussed the liability and advised Mr. Stubbs they should not be picked up by the City.

e. Garbage Cans (125) - \$8,639

The Manager stated the request is for 125 cans but with the many issues recently discussed, they may need to budget for 250 cans.

f. Air Conditioning Repair Equipment -\$5,983

Mr. Blanton reported the City has received a quote from Advance Auto in Hamlet for the equipment. Mr. Stubbs explained the City cannot service air conditions on the new vehicles. They have to carry them to the dealership for repairs. The purchase will save the City money.

f. Police Department

a. Police Cars (2)

With the Police Chief retiring, Mr. Blanton explained he has not received any formal requests from the Police Department. Once a new Chief is in place, he will then bring requests back to Council.

b. The Manager discussed creating a new position at the Police Department. He explained the savings in salaries from the Dispatcher positions could be used for a Major's position that would work from 3 pm – midnight in a Supervisor's role for night shift and the person could be out in the community. Council discussed the need for an Administrative Assistant to cover the desk. Mr. Blanton advised he will evaluate the matter and bring it back to Council.

3. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS § 143-318.11 (a) (6) to discuss personnel matter

At 9:29 am, Council Member McQueen motioned to go into Closed Session. Council Member Buie offered the second and the vote was 4-0.

At 9:49 am, Council returned to Open Session with no action taken.

A break was taken from 9:49 am – 10:05 am

4. Water Plant and Waste Water Treatment Plant Issues

Mr. Darrell Lowery, Waste Water Treatment Plant Supervisor, addressed Council. The City Manager notified Council the WWTP has experienced more than average flows the last few months. The City may ask the State for assistance with smoke tests to locate the problem areas. He also announced the Wooten Company should complete their report shortly which will provide ideas on how the Plant can proceed with expansion. Mr. Lowery explained the equipment has been ordered for the smoke test. By walking the lines, they have located some

manholes with problems. He explained that averages for last year during the same time-frame were 700,000 gallons and now over 1 million each day since the hurricane in the fall. Council Member McQueen inquired if the State was giving towns a break in fines due to the hurricane. Mr. Lowery replied he has talked with the State but has not received a letter and does not know about the fines at this point. Mr. McQueen suggested he make contact with Senator Tom McInnis. Mr. Blanton explained the crew has been working hard, walking miles and miles. The benefits of the smoke tester were discussed and the possibility of using a drone with a federally licensed operator was considered.

Mr. Lowery also reported the Plant is dealing with large quantities of oil and grease. A new type of bacteria was purchased to control it. Ernie Billingsley is checking the pumping stations and using the new bacteria as well.

Mayor Bayless asked if they were able to do any land applications. Mr. Lowery responded the digester is half-full and they were hauling this week. They had an issue with the loggers that left limbs in the roads. The debris had to be removed to have access to the fields.

Mr. Bayless inquired if the Plant had any equipment that may need replacing in 1-2 years. Mr. Lowery advised the grid auger hopper is working but may need replacing at a cost of \$60,000.00. Council Member McQueen suggested the WWTP and WTP Supervisors meet with the City Manager to provide short-term and long-term plans for their Departments since the City's bond will be paid in 2020. He feels this will be the best time to get the 2 departments close to where they need to be.

Mr. Lowery expressed concern with the portable generator utilized by the WWTP, saying it was never intended to be long term. Mayor Bayless asked for the needed size and Mr. Lowery responded he will check on the size and get quotes for the generator and grid system. Council commended Mr. Lowery for his work.

Mr. Robert Brown discussed the age of the Water Plant and equipment. He has issues with the calibration on the scales and with the clarifier installed 1992-93. The lifespan of a clarifier is 20 years. It was repaired several years ago when the mixer was replaced. Now the problem is the scraper. Mr. Brown discussed purchasing parts in advance, but when needed, the parts are not correct. Often, the manufacturer of the parts is no longer in business. He will not know the issues with the clarifier until it is drained and inspected. He also discussed the computer-based programs for the SCADA System are designed for each water plant following State rules.

Mr. Brown mentioned another issue at the Water Plant is employee replacement. His last hire was from out of state because locals did not apply. Certifications are required but an employee has to work 1 year prior to getting any certification. Mr. Brown informed Council that his employees will be retiring before he does and he does not have anyone to mentor except for his most recent hire.

Mayor Bayless inquired on the rising cost of chemicals for the plant. Mr. Brown stated the chemical costs have increased and the City now has mandated EPA testing at a cost of \$700.00 each month. The Mayor replied these are the reasons for the water rate increases. Mr. Brown said the Water Plant has the ability to produce 3 million gallons of water per day. The plant is

currently set at 900,000 gallons with one-third going outside of the City that does not go to the WWTP.

The Mayor asked if the cost of water breaks had increased this year and the City Manager responded the repairs are less this year. Mr. Brown said last year they thought the issue was pressure so they cut back on the pressure, ran the medium pump all winter and filled the tanks. Now he thinks the issue last year was the extremely cold weather.

5. Comments of Council for 2019/2020 Projects

Council Member Buie suggested the City look at water rates for businesses and property owners that spend money to beautify their lawns using second meters. The City Manager replied he was investigating a non-residential and irrigation rate. He will bring a draft to Council. Council Member Massagee stated many residents have turned off their irrigation since the increase. Council Member McQueen asked Staff to prepare a report of the revenue from July 2018 – March 2019. If possible, he would like a break down of residences and second meters. Mr. Blanton said they will get as much detail as possible. He feels residential rates are where they need to be or higher.

Maurice McLaurin, Parks and Recreation Director, was asked to join the meeting. Mr. Buie expressed concern with the South Hamlet Park. He said they may need to fill in the holes and re-seed or get a good landscaper to come in and get it to grow. Another issue discussed at the Park was fire ants and he asked Mr. McLaurin to keep it sprayed. In response, Mr. McLaurin stated he plans to have it sprayed twice a year.

Memorial Ball Park was discussed with the Manager saying Mr. McLaurin was working to take the plastic down. Council Member Buie suggested doing away with baseball at Memorial Park and using it for soccer to shorten the season. It would require clearing the mound and seeding the infield. Council Member McQueen suggested the park could be used as an amphitheater. Mr. Buie added the City could host a movie night or family day. Council Member Massagee stated the City should pursue grants, stating NC Parks has grant funds available. Mr. Buie stated Council could give funds to assist.

Council Member McQueen asked if it would be possible to have one department take care of cutting all the grass for the City. The matter was discussed but no determination made.

Mr. McQueen asked if the vendor numbers painted on the street during the Seaboard Festival could be pressure washed to remove them. Mr. Blanton said he will check on this.

Council Member McQueen stated Council agreed to forego the July 4th Fireworks and asked Council if they were willing to make a donation to the event, possibly half. Council Member Massagee suggested the money be used for Memorial Park. No decision was made. Mr. Blanton will reach out to the County Manager.

Mr. McQueen asked for the progress on a Clean-up day. The City Manager responded the City will co-ordinate with NCDOT in April. Council Member McQueen suggested the City host an Employee Appreciation Day and a Drop-in when the new Chief comes.

Mayor Bayless expressed his appreciation to Council. He said the City is doing well and making plans to move ahead. He asked Staff to make improvements to the front of City Hall and advised the overgrown bushes at the Police Department need to be cut. Council Member McQueen added he would like to see small trees in pots on Main Street. He also called attention to the updates to the buildings on Main Street by the owners. The Mayor said he has spoken with the owner at the Beauty Shop on Main and informed her the City has Façade Grants that may help with her awning.

6. Next Budget Work Session

Council scheduled the next Budget Work Session for April 9, 2019 at 5:30 pm.

7. Adjournment of Meeting

At 11:30 am, Council Member Buie motioned to adjourn. Council Member McQueen provided the second and the vote was 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland
City Clerk

