

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING – WORK SESSION  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM  
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345  
TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2019  
5:30 PM  
MINUTES**

**Governing Body Present:**

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Council Member	Johnathan Buie
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Wendy Massagee
Council Member	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Maurice L. Stuart, II

**Staff Present:**

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

**Others Present:**

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

**2. Adoption of Agenda**

Council Member Buie offered a motion to adopt the Agenda. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

**3. Discussion of ETJ Relinquishment**

Gail Strickland reported the City Manager previously brought the ETJ Relinquishment to Council's attention in February and Council requested the Planning Board meet and make a recommendation. The Planning Board met on April 15, 2019 and discussed several options: to relinquish all, to relinquish a portion, or to reduce the 1-mile ETJ area to ½ mile. After their discussions, the Board felt relinquishing all of the ETJ at once may be too much and elected to suggest a portion now and if the City does not see any repercussions from the relinquishment, move forward with more areas. The Planning Board made the suggestion the City relinquish the following areas: At the intersection of the western side of Battley Dairy Rd and Country Rd., relinquish the ETJ area from that starting point south to where the ETJ ends and going west from the intersection all ETJ south of Country Rd., Mary Salome Rd, Myers St., Freeman Mill and Hylan to where the ETJ ends at Broad St. and County zoning begins. Also recommended to cut: at the intersection of the eastern side of Battley Dairy Rd. and Airport Rd. all the ETJ south of Airport Rd. to where the ETJ ends and County zoning begins and east to where the ETJ ends and County zoning begins. Mrs. Strickland advised the City would not benefit from any growth in the proposed area. Most of the area has County water with the exception of Trailwood. The City Manager stated the area would become County Zoning. Council Member McQueen asked for the reason to piece mill the relinquishment out and not do it all now. Mrs. Strickland explained the

Planning Board felt the City should have a trial area. She also stated there are some areas that may have growth that the City should not give up such as Hwy. 74 between Hamlet and Rockingham and Hwy 74 towards Laurel Hill. Mrs. Strickland advised a large percentage of code complaints come from this area and residents complain they have to abide by the City's rules but do not have any City services. She has spoken with several towns that have reduced their ETJ and they have not had any regrets. Mr. Blanton reminded Council the City of Rockingham recently started the process to reduce their ETJ by 18%. Mrs. Strickland stated the proposed area is approximately 20% of Hamlet's ETJ. The City has procedures they must follow and she will contact the City's Attorney for his direction. Staff discussed with Council that any property owner outside the City limits that wants sewer services would have to request annexation. Council Member Martin asked for the City Manager's recommendation. Mr. Blanton responded he would recommend getting rid of all of the ETJ, but the proposal is a good first step to monitor for a year. Mr. Martin motioned to relinquish the proposed ETJ. Council Member Buie provided the second. Council Member McQueen expressed concern for the first house that is outside the ETJ. Mrs. Strickland suggested the City explain this is the first step in relinquishing more parcels. Mr. McQueen suggested relinquishing the ETJ up to the city limits. Mrs. Strickland explained Council had expressed concern of eliminating the ETJ up to the city limits previously. The motion presented by Mr. Martin passed with a vote of 5-0.

#### **4. Updates to Personnel Policy**

##### Article X Section 1: Retiree Insurance Benefits

Mr. Blanton reported he did a comprehensive overview of the personnel policy when he first came to Hamlet and took care of numerous issues. Additional changes are now needed. The first revision is to the Retiree Insurance Benefits as discussed previously with Council. The policy presented is almost verbatim with the discussion whereas if an employee is hired on or after July 1, 2019 and has 30 years of qualified service and 25 years of consecutive service with City of Hamlet, the City will provide 100% health care coverage until age 65. The second part is an employee that has been with the City for 20 years and has 25 or more years of service, the City would pay 85% of healthcare coverage until age 65. Mayor Bayless asked about the police officers that may retire at age 55. Mr. Blanton explained the policy would cover the employees up to their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Council Member Massagee asked if the policy was for police only or all City employees. The Manager responded all employees. Mrs. Massagee thought Council had discussed they could not continue the health insurance for retirees. Mr. Blanton stated he recalled the consensus of Council, when discussed previously, was that the City would continue the benefit for employees that met certain criteria. Council Member McQueen stated he thought the discussion was that moving forward the benefit would not be there. Mrs. Massagee said the City could not continue to pay retiree benefits and Mr. McQueen added the benefit may require current employees to pay a portion of their insurance. Mr. Blanton said he would get the minutes for clarification. Council Member McQueen asked if the presented proposal was the same as current policy. Mr. Blanton responded the current policy provides tiered benefits for the number of years an employee works and pays indefinitely. He stated Council specifically discussed the 85% coverage; Mr. Buie brought it up because there would be so few people that would meet the criteria. The Mayor said the City has to offer something to keep employees and few people will receive the benefit. Mr. McQueen stated he would hate to see the benefit cause current employees to pay for their insurance. Mrs. Massagee mentioned Council has a duty to taxpayers as well. Mr. Buie responded the rotation of employees would cause the City to spend taxpayers' money to train employees. He did not feel the City should pay 100%. Council Member Stuart asked if the policy would relate to current employees and Mr. Blanton advised it would be for hires after July 1, 2019. Council Member Massagee inquired on the City's costs for retiree benefits and the City Manager responded approximately \$105,000.00

annually. Mrs. Strickland stated the difference in the proposed and current policy is the City would no longer pay benefits for employees that worked 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, etc. Council was eliminating the lower tiers but still rewarding the long-term employees. Mrs. Massagee asked if this was common for municipalities because it was not common for other employers. She also called attention to the Auditor's comments regarding the benefits. Mr. Blanton referred to a memo he had sent Council where they discussed removing the tiers with the exception of the 2 presented in the proposal. Council Member McQueen said that he did remember the discussion but he thought the benefit was being removed. Council Member Massagee suggested tabling the matter at this time and Council Member Martin agreed. It was consensus of Council to table until the next Budget Meeting.

Article V Section 13: Employee Incentive Plan

Mr. Blanton explained the change to the policy eliminates the bonus and lump sum payout and provides the employee with a 2.5% pay increase when certifications or education are received. It puts into policy what the practice has been.

Article V Section 7 (B): Change of Pay to Demotion

The City Manager explained, previously if an employee took a voluntary demotion, the employee would keep the same rate of pay or move to the highest rate of pay in the step in which your job is categorized. The proposed change states if you seek a voluntary demotion, your salary will be determined by the Department Head and Manager within the step of Class where the employee is demoted.

Section 8: Death Leave

Mr. Blanton explained currently if an employee takes death leave, they receive 2 days. If more days are needed, they are required to use vacation time. The change in the policy would allow the employee to use sick time in lieu of vacation time.

Article VII Section 3(B): Vacation Leave Accrual

The City Manager advised he has added the word consecutive to the Vacation Leave Accrual. An employee that worked for the City, left, and then returned, would accrue hours at the starting rate where they returned the second time, not total years worked for the City. It puts into policy what the practice has been.

Article VII Section 3 (G) (1): Vacation Leave Payout at Termination

Mr. Blanton reported the proposed change states an employee that leaves the City for involuntary separation will not be paid for any accumulated vacation leave. The current policy states the payment is at the discretion of the Department Head.

Article VIII Section 1 (E):

The City Manager said the current policy had conflicting procedures for dismissal. The change states the City will follow Article 8, Section 2. This gives a clear guideline of how an employee will be dismissed.

Article VIII Section 1(2): Failing to Report to Work

Mr. Blanton explained in the current policy, one part says if you do not report for work for 2 days and one part says 3 days you are considered to have resigned. The proposed change to 2 days corrects the conflicting policies.

Article VII, Section 10: Military Leave

The City Manager reported he worked with the City's Attorney and Human Resources Director to get the legal change to add the required language in the policy.

Article X Section 8: Employee Development

Mr. Blanton said he added the changes to eliminate the City paying for classes and degrees and then employees changing jobs immediately. The proposed change requires an employee that voluntarily terminates employment with the City after completion of the courses and prior to completing twelve consecutive months of active employment, to refund a prorated amount of the educational expenses provided to them in the previous twelve months. Council Member McQueen suggested the Manager check with the Police Department to make sure they are in compliance. Mayor Bayless added the Manager may want to review the Police Departments policies. Mr. Blanton said he and the Police Chief had discussed it and City policies would supersede the Police Department's policies.

Appendix B: Allocation of Positions to Salary Grades

The City Manager advised the Appendix shows the salary grades with the 3% increase, effective July 1<sup>st</sup>. It also addresses some of the positions that have been problems in the past and adds new positions created.

Appendix F: Professionalism Policy

Mr. Blanton discussed the proposed professionalism policy saying it has become more common with municipalities and counties. The policy covers minimum guidelines for clothing, hair, personal hygiene, jewelry, tattoos. etc. He said he and the Mayor reviewed the policy and Mr. Bayless suggested any hat must be a City of Hamlet hat. The Manager said the City has a formal policy in place for what is appropriate.

Motion to Approve

Council Member McQueen made the motion to approve the revisions removing the Retiree Insurance Benefit update. Council Member Buie provided the second and the vote was 5-0.

Mr. McQueen asked if the policy and procedures was officially adopted by Council. Mr. Blanton responded in 2017, upon advice of the City Attorney, the Personnel Policy was removed from the Code of Ordinances and adopted as its own policy.

**5. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS§143-318.11 (a) (6) for a personnel matter.**

At 6:26 pm, Council Member Buie motioned to go into Closed Session. A second was received from Council Member Martin. The vote was 5-0.

At 6:55 pm, Council Member McQueen motioned to return to Open Session and Council Member Buie provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

**6. Motion to Adjourn.**

At 6:56 pm, Council Members McQueen and Stuart motioned to adjourn. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland  
City Clerk

