

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2019
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

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

Staff Present:

City Manager	Jonathan Blanton
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
City Attorney	TC Morphis
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
IT	Zach Garner
Public Works Director	Billy Stubbs
Chief of Police	TL McMasters

Others Present: Linda Bayless, Dr. Dale McInnis, Dr. Hal Shuler, Glenda Hampton, Geraldine Ludlum, Lisa O'Neal, Matthew O'Neal, Kay Cavendish, Tim Nevinger, Chad Guinn, Chris Carpenter, Katrina Chance, Dewey Brower, Daniel Coates, Justin Ryder, Jaiden Solinas, Jacen Hoffman, Chase Roberson, John Roberson, Thomas Keyes, Will Fehlman, Oscar Sellers, Katrina Chance, and Amy Guinn

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and recognized Boy Scout Troop 527 who are completing their Citizenship in the Community Award. Also recognized in attendance was Mr. Oscar Sellers who will be joining Council in December.

2. Invocation

Pastor Bill Monroe of Ellerbe Fellowship Baptist Church offered the Prayer.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Mayor Bayless announced the deletion of Item 6; it will be postponed until the December Meeting. Also requested by the Mayor was the addition of Item 8a to discuss dogs in the City Limits. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the amended Agenda and Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 3-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the October 8, 2019 Regular Meeting were approved by motions of Council Members Martin and McQueen. The vote was 3-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

Ms. Kay Cavendish spoke to the Board, saying she is not a citizen of Hamlet, but of the County. She expressed her appreciation for the improvements the Maintenance Department has made to Hwy 38

and Hamlet Avenue. She added that the cleaned right of ways give a good impression as people come into the City.

Dr. Dale McInnis and Dr. Hal Shuler from Richmond Community College addressed Council to make a special announcement. A statement was read by Dr. Shuler announcing, on behalf of the college and several friends, the implementation of the Eddie R. Martin Law Enforcement Leadership Scholarship. Dr. McInnis explained friends of Chief Martin approached the College and asked if they could initiate a scholarship for his legacy. A banquet will be held at the College at a later date and Mr. Martin will be invited next year to meet the first recipient of the scholarship. Council Member Martin expressed both his surprise and appreciation.

Mr. Chris Carpenter, President of the Seaboard Festival, spoke to thank the City, the City Manager, Police, Fire, Doc, and Public Works for their assistance with the Festival. He stated the Committee pays the employees, but the City accommodates them. Mayor Bayless thanked the Seaboard Festival Committee for taking over the Festival. Mr. Carpenter offered compliments, as a citizen, to the City Manager and thanked Council for adding the discussion of dogs to the Agenda. He runs in the City and is aware of the situation and the locations of the dogs.

Ms. Katrina Chance, Executive Director of Richmond County Partnership for Children, gave Council information on the organization. They are the County's resource for programs and services designed for children from birth – age 5, focusing on professional development and NC Pre-K subsidy. They have an awareness campaign ongoing for Adverse Childhood Experiences and the State is having a Resilience Week. She encouraged everyone to watch an educational video on UNC-TV November 19th. Also announced by Ms. Chance was the use of an "outdoor water closet on wheels" that will be used to bring awareness to adverse childhood experiences. Mr. Blanton added Ms. Chance is new to the area and wanted to come to the meeting to introduce herself to Council and the residents.

New Business

6. Recognition of Fairview Heights Elementary Bowtie for Boys Club

Item removed from Agenda – postponed until December.

7. Ordinance 2019-04 Demolition of 215 Pine St.

Mayor Bayless announced Staff is requesting Council issue an Ordinance to Demolish property located at 215 Pine Street. The Richmond County Tax Card lists the owner as Warren R. Simmons. Notices of violations, and statements of fines were mailed by certified and regular mail to the address on the property card. The certified mail was returned unclaimed; however, the regular mail was not. The property has burned, leaving 2 damaged chimneys, and other debris that constitutes a hazard. The property owner has not made contact with the City. Staff wishes to move forward with the removal of the structure, following the requirements set forth in the NC General Statutes, and asks Council to issue the Ordinance to Demolish. Council Member McQueen motioned to approve the Ordinance. The second was provided by Council Member Massagee and the vote was 3-0. Mayor Bayless added the City has a number of houses they would like to remove, but we are making efforts.

8. Proclamation for Hospice Month.

Mayor Bayless read the proclamation and presented it to Lisa O'Neal, Hospice Volunteer/Outreach Coordinator.

8a. Discussion of Dog Complaints

Council Member McQueen started the discussion by stating, over the years, the City has had numerous problems with loose and stray dogs. He gave an example of 5-6 months prior, a man had to shoot a dog that was attacking him and his pet. Mr. McQueen advised Council had previously discussed addressing the issue in the next budget, but he feels Council should do its due diligence and give the matter attention now. He is not recommending they hire someone, but use some of the money in the budget and some of the current employees to address the issue. Mr. McQueen asked Chief McMasters to give his experience with the dogs. The Chief of Police reported to this date in 2019, 280 animal complaints have been received and for the month of November 15 have been logged. He added it is a growing concern and his Department will address it. The Chief explained the City has an animal truck, but if a call is received, an officer has to get the animal truck to address the problem and then transport the dog to the animal shelter on the other side of Rockingham. Then, if an Officer is in the animal truck and receives an emergency call, by the time he can get to his patrol vehicle and respond, the problem could be a mute-point. This is burdensome to the Police Department. Council Member McQueen said this was not a negative to the Police Department. They are doing a great job in other areas, but what is happening with the dogs is not working. He still wants to keep the matter in the budget for the future, but for now money for lost employees could be used to bring in off-duty officers to address the problem. Mr. McQueen said they need to give the Chief the needed resources. The Chief added he has spoken with the Sheriff to get required training for Officers. Mayor Bayless inquired if the Animal Shelter was accepting animals at this time. In response, Chief McMasters advised they were and Tracy's Dog Grooming has 2 kennels and she has been gracious to take dogs. The Mayor stated Council needs to put money in the budget for a trained Animal Control Officer and Mr. McQueen responded they need to address the matter now. Mr. Bayless inquired if the police could attach the dogs to owners. The Chief replied they have not at this point as a courtesy, but he has spoken with the Manager and they plan to initiate the process. When asked how many positions were short in the Police Department, the Chief advised five. City Manager Jonathan Blanton stated the Police Department will move forward with training and would like to have a non-sworn position working 28 hours each week to address the concern. The Mayor stated a non-sworn officer cannot take action against an owner. Council Member McQueen asked the City Attorney if Council needed to vote on the issue or if consensus was sufficient. Mr. Morphis replied, at this point, Council is directing the Chief to use his resources with no change in the Ordinance so consensus was fine. Mr. McQueen complimented Chief McMasters on the policing of the City Lake. Mr. Bayless asked to include the item in the mid-year budget in January.

9. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member Martin motioned to approve the Tax Releases. Council Member McQueen provided the second. The vote was 3-0.

Other Business

10. City Manager's Report.

Mr. Blanton thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He announced basketball registration is on-going and gave the dates. Also, he announced the City has received a \$12,000.00 grant from GameTime and Cunningham out of Charlotte for playground equipment that will be installed at City Lake in approximately 6 weeks. This will be an excellent addition to the City Lake project. He thanked Staff for the work to install the fountain in the lake and stated he had received numerous compliments on it. Also reported by Mr. Blanton was the completion of the repaving of the Senior Center parking lot. He has spoken with TRG Sign Company and they will have the City's additional entrance signs by the end of the year and they will be appropriately placed. The Manager announced City offices

will be closed November 28th and 29th for Thanksgiving. Thursday's garbage will be picked up on Friday and employees working on Friday will take the following Monday as a holiday. Mr. Blanton announced the City's Christmas Tree Lighting will be Monday, December 2nd at 5:30 at the Depot Park and the Christmas Parade will be December 5th at 3:30. He congratulated Council Member Martin on the announcement of the Law Enforcement Scholarship in his honor.

11. Comments of Council.

Council Member Martin inquired on the progress of a complaint property on Washington Street, near Monroe Avenue School. Mr. Blanton reported the City has received the Inspector's report and they hope to move forward in the next few months, after the demolition of the Pine St. property. He added the City has received numerous complaints regarding the abandoned, dilapidated house near Mrs. Maske.

Council Member McQueen thanked Troop 527 for coming and advised working on their badge would be helpful in the future. He also thanked Ms. Cavendish for giving accolades to the employees. He is proud to be part of this group of people and the strides that have been made the past few months. In regards to the City's Truck Ordinance, that was adopted at the October Meeting, Mr. McQueen explained the City did not adopt a new policy; they only clarified the existing policy and brought it up-to-date. He said it was reported incorrectly in the media. Council Member McQueen offered appreciation to the Seaboard Festival Committee and the City's Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments for their assistance with the Festival. He also stated it was an honor and privilege to witness his fellow Council Member and friend, Eddie Martin, be honored for his outstanding achievements.

12. Mayors Comments.

Mayor Bayless congratulated Council Member Martin, saying it was well deserved. He thanked Kay Cavendish and Tim Nevinger for the work they do on Hamlet Avenue, along with Bernice Owens. The Mayor announced Mr. Stuart could not be in attendance and congratulated him, Mr. Moore and Mr. Sellers on their recent elections. He thanked Ms. Katrina Chance for her information on Partnership for Children and thanked Mr. Blanton for his involvement in investigating complaints the City receives. In conclusion, the Mayor wished everyone a Safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

13. Motion to Adjourn.

At 7:42 pm, Council Members McQueen and Massagee provided the motion and second to adjourn. The vote was 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

