

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro Tem	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Maurice Stuart
Council Member	Oscar Sellers

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

Others Present: Linda Bayless, Abbie Covington, Pastor Marvin Taylor Jr., Barbara Cato, Robert Singletary, Sr., Gavin Stone, Kay Cavendish, Tim Nevinger, Lee Berry, Willie Baldwin, Audrey Stuart and Charlie Melvin

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Invocation

Bishop Marvin Taylor of Outreach for Jesus Church offered the Prayer.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Mayor Bayless reported Attorney Morphis has requested a Closed Session for Attorney-Client Privilege and Personnel Issues per NCGS§ 143-318.11 (a)(3)(6). Councilman McQueen motioned to adopt the Agenda with the addition. Councilman Stuart provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the February 11, 2020 Regular and Closed Session Meetings were approved by motions of Council Members Martin and Stuart. The vote was 4-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

No one presented to address Council.

New Business

6. Oath for Newly Appointed Council Member

The Clerk administered the Oath and Council Member Covington was seated with Council. She thanked Council for the appointment and expressed excitement in moving forward, doing good things.

7. Resolution 2020-01 Request to Permanently Close Alleyway off Champlain St.

Mayor Bayless reported the City has received a petition to permanently close an alleyway off of Champlain St. that dead ends at 114 W. Main St. The Mayor read the Resolution. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the Resolution, setting the Public Hearing for April 14, 2020. Councilman Sellers provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

8. Discussion of Request to Temporarily Close Park St. from Richmond County Schools.

Mayor Bayless stated he received a letter from Richmond County School Superintendent, Jeff Maples, and a request from Jerry Ethridge requesting permission to close Park Street behind Fairview Heights School Monday through Friday from 8:30 am – 2:30 pm. Council discussed if the closing was a safety issue and if the residents would be inconvenienced. The Mayor suggested tabling the matter until more information could be obtained from a representative of the School System. Council Member Sellers motioned to table the matter until the next meeting. The second was provided by Council Member Covington. The vote was 5-0.

9. Approval of Tax Releases

Councilman Stuart motioned to approve the Tax Releases. Councilman McQueen provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

10. Date for 2020-21 Budget Work Session

Council set the date and time of March 31, 2020 at 9 am for the Budget Work Session. The City Manager explained he and the Finance Officer will meet with Department Heads prior to the meeting with Council. He will bring capital outlay items over \$5,000.00 to Council for consideration.

Other Business

11. City Manager's Report.

Mr. Blanton thanked Mrs. Covington for her willingness to serve on Council and displayed a photo from November 1975, shortly after she was first sworn in on Council. He stated it was good to have someone with experience and looks forward to working with her. The Manager reminded everyone that baseball registration is ongoing. In regards to Gene Ross' train replica, Mr. Blanton advised the City has obtained it and it is on display in the Tornado Building. He thanked Council for support of the project. The closing of City Hall for Good Friday, April 10th was announced. The Manager expressed appreciation to Kay Cavendish and Tim Nevinger for their upgrades to the Spring St. and Hamlet Avenue area with their recent addition of art sculptures. He reported the fountain is once again operational. Updates on the playground and caboose restoration were provided; the rainy weather has delayed both. Mr. Blanton thanked all that attended the Community Meeting at the Senior Center and provided input on the project. The Manager reported the demolition of the Washington Avenue property approved by Council is scheduled for the week of March 23rd.

The Manager asked for Council's consideration and guidance on providing information to Council, explaining he had received an email from Councilman Sellers requesting printed copies of the January 2019 - current check registers and Attorney bills. Mr. Blanton stated he is glad to provide the information, but wanted guidance on how to move forward. In the past, he has sent information requests to all of Council for transparency and asked if Council wanted hard copies and if they wanted to use the current Public Records Request Form. Council Member Sellers advised he wanted a hard copy monthly. The Manager clarified that Mr. Sellers wanted both the Attorney bills and check register and Councilman Sellers confirmed. Councilman McQueen asked for the number of pages that were

compiled for Mr. Sellers; the Manager reported the check register was 80 pages and the Attorney bills for the last 3 months were 12-15 pages. Mr. McQueen added it takes time if the documents are not readily available. Council Member Covington inquired if the City has a policy for a large records' request. Mr. Blanton reviewed the Public Records Request Form and advised the City charges 10 cents per printed page. Attorney Morphis explained the charge can only be for actual costs of materials. Mayor Bayless and Council Members Stuart and Covington advised they want digital, not printed format. Mr. Sellers stated he would pay the cost of the printed pages.

11. Comments of Council.

Council Member Covington stated she is looking forward to serving.

Council Member Stuart asked the citizens to attend the meetings. He thanked Pastor Taylor for offering the prayer and Mrs. Covington for serving on Council. He encouraged sponsorships for children's baseball signups. Lastly, he advised everyone should take precaution with the coronavirus.

Councilman Martin congratulated Council Member Covington, saying she is a valuable member of Council and he is looking forward to serving with her.

Council Member Sellers welcomed Mrs. Covington to the Board.

Mayor Pro Tem McQueen thanked Council Member Covington for expressing her interest in the appointment and thanked her for all she has done and will do.

13. Mayors Comments.

Mayor Bayless thanked Mrs. Covington and wished everyone a great Easter.

13A. Closed Session for Client Attorney Privilege and Personnel Issues per NCGS§ 143-318.11 (a)(3)(6).

At 7:30 pm, Councilman Stuart motioned to go into Closed Session and stated the Statute. Councilman Martin provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

At 8:12 pm. Council returned to Open Session. Mayor Bayless reported no matters were voted on during Closed Session.

16. Motion to Adjourn.

At 8:13 pm, Council Members Covington and Martin provided the motion and second to adjourn. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

