

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM  
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020  
7:00 PM  
MINUTES**

**Due to Governor Cooper's Order in regards to the Coronavirus, the meeting had limited seating. Additional seating was provided in the foyer.**

**Governing Body Present:**

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro Tem	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Maurice Stuart via phone
Council Member	Oscar Sellers
Council Member	Abbie Covington

**Staff Present:**

City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
IT	Zach Garner
Public Works	Billy Stubbs

**Others Present:** Will Toler, Carroll Blakely and Robert Carlisle

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Invocation**

A Moment of Silence was observed.

**3. Adoption of Agenda**

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the Agenda. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the September 8, 2020 Regular and Closed Session Meetings were approved by motions of Council Members Martin and Sellers. The vote was 5-0.

**5. Comments from Attendees**

No one presented to address Council.

**New Business**

**6. Public Hearing – Rezoning Parcel 103 & 105 Gin Mill Rd.**

Mayor Bayless explained Carroll Blakely and Cynda Blakely have submitted a rezoning request for the duplex located at 103 & 105 Gin Mill Rd. The request is to rezone the property from Neighborhood

Business (B-3) to Residential 6 (R-6) zoning. The property owners state it has always been used as a residence. The Planning Board met on September 21, 2020 and offers a favorable recommendation for the rezoning. The Mayor opened the floor to the Public Hearing. No comments were made. The Public Hearing was closed.

**7. Consistency Statement & Decision of Rezoning Parcel 103 & 105 Gin Mill Rd.**

Council Member Martin motioned the rezoning was consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

Council Member Covington motioned to rezone the property. Council Member Sellers offered the second. The vote was 5-0.

**8. Proclamation for Alzheimer's Awareness Month.**

Mayor Bayless read the Proclamation announcing October 2020 as *ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS MONTH* in the City of Hamlet, and encouraged all our residents to learn more about Alzheimer's disease, the impact on those affected, and how the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits may reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

**9. Approval of Tax Releases.**

Council Member Martin provided the motion to approve the tax releases. Council Member Covington offered the second. The vote was 5-0.

**10. Consideration of Depot Office Rentals.**

City Manager Matt Christian reported, back in March, Council took action to close all City facilities including the Depot Offices where the City has tenants. The buildings and offices remain closed. The tenants are now requesting to return to their offices. He and Staff have developed policies to re-open the offices with strict COVID guidelines. Mr. Christian asked Council to consider and approve the re-opening. Council Member McQueen inquired if the tenants were good with the restrictions. The City Manager confirmed. Council Member Covington motioned to allow the tenants to return to their offices following the guidelines. The second was offered by Mr. McQueen. The vote was 5-0.

**Other Business**

**11. City Manager's Report**

City Manager Matthew Christian expressed thanks to employees for working daily to provide essential services and thanked everyone for welcoming him. He reported the employees are healthy and the City Staff is monitoring constantly and taking action as needed. He asked residents to call City Hall if help is needed. The Manager reported the City has received \$158,345.00 from the County for COVID Relief Funds. Also mentioned was the continued progress on the sewer project; the engineers have made several field visits to get ideas to increase capacity. The Manager informed Council the 2<sup>nd</sup> Food Truck Event was largely successful; people were mindful of the restrictions and acted in a responsible way. Plans are to have one more event this fall and then restart in the Spring.

Mr. Christian, regretfully, announced all holiday events for City employees are cancelled and asked Council to consider additional paid holidays for employees. He has consulted with Department Heads and found the 2 dates that will ensure no interruptions in services to residents are November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Council Members Covington and McQueen provided the motion and second to give the 2 dates as paid holidays to staff. The vote was 5-0.

The City Manager discussed the City's traditional holiday events with Council. It was the Manager's recommendation to cancel the parade and look for ways to possibly livestream the Tree Lighting. After voicing concerns of the large gathering of people, Council Member Sellers motioned to cancel the parade. Council Member Martin offered the second. The vote was 5-0. It was mentioned that funding was removed for Old Fashion Christmas when budget cuts were made this year. In regards to the Tree Lighting, Mr. Christian advised he will explore avenues to have something creative where the citizens can engage, but not gather. Also, considered was the City's recommendation for Halloween. The Manager noted the City doesn't hold any Halloween events and its message to the public would be if you are going out, act responsibly and follow the guidelines. Council discussed the public is expecting the City to make guidelines. Mr. Christian encouraged Council to consider the limitations of a decision, if Council were to make one. He added that the City could make posts and inform people that Council has concern of gatherings for Trick or Treat.

## 12. Comments of Council

Council Member Covington extended sympathy to employee Allen Jacob's family in the passing of his father, Ricky Jacobs. She also stated she has continued to receive positive comments from the citizens on the City's employees. The Council Member noted her distress in having to cancel the Christmas events and noted she was glad to have Council Member Sellers back.

Council Member Sellers thanked Council and Staff for the cards, plants and well wishes during his recent surgery. He said it was humbling. Mr. Sellers encouraged citizens to vote and stay safe.

Council Member Martin welcomed Mr. Sellers back to the meetings and offered his sympathy to the Ricky Jacobs' family.

Mayor Bayless announced Council Member Stuart was participating via phone. Mr. Stuart welcomed Council Member Sellers back and expressed his sympathy to Allen Jacob's family. He encouraged everyone to vote and noted early voting begins this week.

Council Member McQueen announced the community lost an outstanding advocate for children in the community with the passing of Reverend Jacobs. He stated he has received compliments on the public works staff from a citizen that had drains stopped up. He congratulated Mechelle Preslar with the Food Truck Events and said she is doing a great job. Mr. McQueen provided an idea he would like for Council to consider at the next planning session. His thought was to have a more permanent food truck lot, maybe at the A&P parking lot. His thoughts are to landscape the area, add tables and have the food truck owners pay a dividend for the upkeep. The lot could be used at the Seaboard Festival and, if a stage was added, for other community events. In closing, the Council Member thanked the employees for all they do to keep the City running smoothly.

## 13. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless commented on the passing of Rev. Jacobs, saying he will be missed. The Mayor encouraged everyone to vote and to complete the Census. The County is behind in the numbers and the loss of numbers will cost the City money.

Mayor Bayless provided information on a potential new business in the County he was made aware of when he was contacted by NC Division of Air Quality. The company, International Tie Disposal, is a biochar facility that disposes of creosote railroad ties. The ties are brought in, ground, and placed in a kiln to burn. His concern is the facility will be within a mile of the City's water source. Richmond County

recently rezoned a property for the facility, but the City of Hamlet was not notified. Council Member Covington stated she has researched other biochar companies and found they do not burn creosote railroad ties. International Tie Disposal's report shows they will be emitting toxic chemicals. This company will have 460 kilns that will burn 365 days each year. Mrs. Covington expressed her concern that more information was needed. Council Member McQueen stated the company obviously selected a rural area with a County that has budget issues to move to. Mayor Bayless reported that he was contacted by DEQ and felt they had some concerns with the company. Council Member McQueen inquired if the City can request the rezoning information from the County. Mrs. Covington suggested the City register its objection. Mr. McQueen concurred and added they should ask why Richmond County did not notify the City. He noted the area is in Hamlet's Fire District making it an interest and concern for the City. The Manager advised he will gather the requested information and report his findings back to Council. Additionally, he will reach out to DEQ, as a stakeholder in the permitting process, and inquire on the effect it will have on water and air quality.

Council Member Covington expressed concern that, given the past, positive relationship with CSX, that they did not contact the City regarding the project.

Council Member McQueen asked to clarify statements that Richmond County has repeatedly used saying the City's ETJ relinquishment was the reason for the change in Sales Tax Distribution. He advised the City released maybe 10% of its ETJ and did give Richmond County notification of the plan for the relinquishment.

**14. Motion to go into Closed Session per NC General Statute §143-318-11(a)(3) (6) Attorney-Client Privilege and Personnel.**

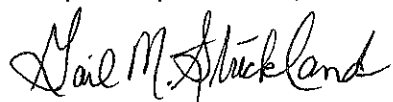
Mayor Bayless asked for a motion to go into Closed Session per NC General Statute §143-318.11 (a)(3) (6) Attorney – Client Privilege and Personnel. At 7:45 pm, Council Member McQueen offered the motion. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

At 8:11 pm. Council Members Covington and Martin motioned to return to Open Session. The vote was 4-0. (Council Member Stuart's phone call ended during the Closed Session Meeting)

**15. Motion to Adjourn**

At 8:12 pm, Council Members Covington and Sellers provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

