

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, JULY 13, 2021
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
Council Member	Abbie Covington

Staff Present:

City Attorney	Brady Herman
City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
IT	Zach Garner

Others Present: Pastor Marvin Taylor, Jerry Smith, Gavin Stone and Margaret Williams

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the Meeting to Order at 7:00 pm.

2. Invocation

Pastor Marvin Taylor of Outreach for Jesus offered the prayer.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the Agenda. The second was offered by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 5-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the June 8, 2021 Regular Meeting and Closed Session and June 24, 2021 Special Meeting and Closed Session were approved by motions of Council Members Martin and Covington. The vote was 5-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

Margaret Williams, who resides at 408 Pine Street, addressed Council to get an update on the property located at 404 Pine Street. She reported one chimney had fallen earlier and she has fear that a second chimney may fall onto her house. The City Manager reported an asbestos inspection has been completed on the dwelling. Staff has met with the property owner, but no progress has been made. Council will be presented with an Ordinance to Demolish at the next Council Meeting. Ms. Williams asked for a time-frame for the removal of the house. Mr. Christian explained it will take several months to go through the required process, but hopefully by the end of the year. She inquired on liability if the chimney should fall on her house. Attorney Brady Herman advised the liability would be with the

property owner. He will research if the matter can be expedited due to the safety concern of the chimney.

Old Business

6. Public Hearing: Zoning Ordinance Amendments 160D

City Manager Matt Christian explained the Summary of Changes to comply with state law are primarily procedural and administrative; there are no changes to uses or zoning districts. The Mayor opened the floor to the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak. The Public Hearing was closed.

7. Consistency Statement and Decision of Zoning Ordinance Updates

Mayor Bayless asked for a motion on the Consistency Statement. Council Member Covington motioned the updates were consistent with the City's Zoning Ordinance. The second was offered by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 5-0.

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

8. Consideration of Amendments to Code of Ordinances – Regarding Dogs

The Mayor stated Council tabled the matter at the last meeting and asked the Attorney to prepare other options with civil penalties. He advised Council has 3 proposals to consider. Council Member Martin reported Option B was recommended by the City Manager and Chief of Police. Council Member Sellers motioned to approve Option B. Mr. Martin provided the second. Council Member McQueen stated he would like to see more of a civil penalty rather than using the court system for dog issues. The City Manager responded the penalties would be the same as any code enforcement notices; fines and then a judgement if they failed to pay the fines. Mr. McQueen asked if a criminal citation would be written to go to court for the offense. Mr. Christian responded the City has the option to do that. He said the officer that answers the call would collect the evidence and make the case for the civil process. He has given clear direction to the Police Chief that the civil process would be the City's approach unless there are other crimes involved. Council Member Covington added the proposed amendment does not specify the order in which things will happen. The City Attorney advised at the end of Chapter 4 of the Code of Ordinances it states any violation can be subject to a misdemeanor and right below gives the civil penalties. He read the penalties. The officer, based on this section, would have the discretion to do either way. He added that most ordinances are written to be either/or but Council could eliminate the criminal enforcement. Mrs. Covington stated a barking dog should never be a criminal offense. The City Manager pointed out that the Ordinance does not only include barking dogs, but other dog issues that could be criminal acts. Mr. McQueen stated he does not like that it says either and it should have clarification. Mr. Martin responded the officer can use discretion. Council voted on Option B. The vote was 3-2 with Council Members McQueen and Covington voting in opposition.

New Business

9. Update to Code of Ordinances Article 2 §2-121 -- §132 Regarding Planning Board and Board of Adjustment – Ordinance No. 2021-04.

Mayor Bayless advised the changes to the Code of Ordinances are necessary due to the updates to the Zoning Ordinance. The City Manager reported the changes removed the conflicts that existed. There were provisions for the Boards in both the Zoning Ordinance and Code of Ordinances. The changes unify them. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the Ordinance Updates. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

10. Consideration of Policies for Hamlet Zoning Board and Board of Adjustment

Mr. Christian explained this is the final piece of the 160D updates. We updated the Zoning Ordinance and the Code of Ordinances. This is a policy that was previously captured in the Code of Ordinance, but refers to officers and duties; adopting as a policy is the best practice. Council Member Stuart motioned to adopt the Policies. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

11. Consideration of Fire Contract with Dobbins Heights

Council Member Covington inquired if the contract was annual. Mr. Christian responded it was previously 5 years, now 3 years, due to the uncertainty at the time with what the future held and with the nature of our services. Council Member Martin inquired if there was an increase in the amount Dobbins Heights would pay for fire service. Mr. Christian answered the new contract has \$2,000.00 yearly increases. He has discussed the contract with Mayor Blue, but has not submitted it to Dobbins Heights. Mrs. Covington inquired if the fee always increases. Council Member McQueen answered the number of calls started low, but now the fire department has more calls in Dobbins Heights. Council Member Stuart motioned to approve the Contract. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

12. Consideration of Resolution – Building Inspection Contract with Richmond County

Mayor Bayless reported there are no fees attached to the Contract. The City Manager advised it is a continuation of services. Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Contract. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

13. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member Stuart motioned to approve the Tax Releases. The second was offered by Council Member Sellers. The vote was 5-0.

14. Consideration of Global Packaging Encroachment Agreement

Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Agreement. The second was offered by Council Member Martin. The vote was 5-0.

Other Business

15. City Manager's Report

City Manager Matthew Christian reported on upcoming American Legion baseball games and announced Coach George Whitfield will be in attendance Thursday. He advised soccer registration is ongoing through August 6th. The Manager provided an update on the Bridges Street sewer collapse issue. Council Member McQueen questioned the proposed estimate of \$500,000.00 for the repairs in comparison to a previous repair on Charlotte Street for significantly less. Mr. Christian explained the scope of this project includes a longer stretch of linear feet, setting manholes, filling a void required by the railroad and flipping the grade to catch the businesses. Mr. McQueen inquired on the current Charlotte Street project. The Manager reported the utility work is complete; now the asphalt patches must be done. He congratulated Senior Center Director Sarah Locklear for the Center being designated as a Center of Excellence. Also announced was Fire Chief Calvin White is retiring the end of August. Mr. Christian thanked him for his service to Hamlet and stated he will begin recruitment for a replacement immediately.

16. Comments of Council

Council Member Sellers congratulated the hard work of Mrs. Locklear at the Senior Center. He encouraged citizens to come to and be involved in the meetings. He thanked Ms. Williams for attending

and thanked the City employees for their hard work. Mr. Sellers wished Calvin White well on his retirement.

Council Member Covington said she is optimistic that next year the City can return to its July 4th festivities. She is looking forward to the new fiscal year being more settled and the City being able to improve its future. Mrs. Covington advised when the municipalities met recently, to discuss the Sales Tax Issue, it was recommended the group continue to meet. She said the towns have common problems and ideas that they can share and take advantage of.

Council Member Martin concurred with Mrs. Covington on the July 4th festivities.

Council Member Stuart congratulated Sarah Locklear on the Center's Award. He stated out of 5 counties only 2 Senior Centers received the award. He agreed with the return of the July 4th events and commended the American Legion Baseball program. He encouraged the citizens to be involved and thanked the City employees.

Council Member McQueen acknowledged the Senior Center's achievement and thanked Chief Calvin White for his service to the City. He stated he is looking for things to be smoother and looks forward to working with Council and Staff to make sure they put the citizens of Hamlet first in how the City spends the money. He inquired on the availability of the COVID relief money. Mr. Christian answered the paperwork has been filed and the Capital Project Ordinance adopted. He and Jill Dickens have reviewed webinars. Once the money is received, the City will have until 2026 to spend it. His first priority is to compensate employees that worked during COVID. He has learned the pay can be retroactive. He is also looking at using some of the money for technology investments. He will bring options to Council when the funds are received. Council Member McQueen inquired on the new practice of not providing pay stubs to employees. He has concern that all employees may not have access to internet. Mr. Christian advised employees can opt out and receive a paper document, but it will not be in a check format. Mr. McQueen expressed appreciation for all that everyone does.

17. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless, on behalf of Council, commended the City Manager for his hard work this past year. He said Chief Calvin White has done an outstanding job. He expressed appreciation to the City employees and recognized Sarah Locklear for the Center of Excellence Award. The Mayor announced the Lions Club plans to have the fair return this October. He inquired on the Seaboard Festival. The City Manager advised the Festival will be the last week in October. Council Member McQueen asked the Manager to reach out to the Committee to assist with things the City provides. Mr. Christian advised that he and Mechelle Preslar have been attending the meetings and they will provide the information.

18. Motion to Adjourn

At 7:56 pm, Council Members Covington and Martin provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

