

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM  
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2022  
4:00 PM  
MINUTES**

**Governing Body Present:**

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Mayor          | Bill Bayless    |
| Mayor Pro Tem  | Jesse McQueen   |
| Council Member | Eddie Martin    |
| Council Member | Maurice Stuart  |
| Council Member | Abbie Covington |

**Staff Present:**

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| City Manager     | Matthew Christian |
| City Clerk       | Gail Strickland   |
| Finance Director | Jill Dickens      |

**Others Present:** Gavin Stone, Stephanie Al-Zubaidy and Lisa Lowery

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

**2. Adoption of Agenda**

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the Agenda. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

**3. Approval of Minutes for December 14, 2021 Special Meeting, Regular Meeting and Closed Session.**

Council Member Martin motioned to adopt the Minutes. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

**4. Approval of Tax Releases.**

Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Tax Releases. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

**5. Budget Amendments**

City Manager Matt Christian commented the Budget Amendments are mostly housekeeping amendments for funding mentioned in the past, contributions to other agencies, moving money to cover overages in the budget and money from one line item to another. He advised the ARP Budget Amendments are putting the funds in line items for future reporting. The ARP Fund is now a separate fund. Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Budget Amendments. Council Member McQueen provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

**6. Extension of Covid Policy (Vaccine and Leave)**

The Manager reported the Covid Vaccine and Leave Policy expired at the end of 2021. Approximately 80% of the City's employees are now vaccinated. Council inquired if the City was following the 5-day or 10-day quarantine policy. Mr. Christian responded the 10-day unless there is an employee shortage in the

department. Council Member Covington motioned to extend the Covid Policy (Vaccination Incentive Program and Emergency Paid Covid Sick Leave) as presented. The Vaccination Incentive Program will end June 10, 2022 and the Covid Sick Leave June 30, 2022. Council Member McQueen gave the second. The vote was 4-0.

Mr. Christian asked Council to consider premium pay for part-time employees. The pay would be \$50.00 per eligible pay period. Full time employees were given \$100 per eligible pay period. Council Member Martin motioned to approve the part time premium pay. The second was given by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 4-0.

#### **7. Adoption of Meeting Calendar for Additional Council Meetings**

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the Meeting Calendar for additional meetings on the fourth Tuesdays of February – May 2022 at 4 pm. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

#### **8. Presentation by Stephanie Al-Zubaidy**

The City Manager invited Mrs. Stephanie Al-Zubaidy to speak to Council regarding her recent investments in downtown Hamlet. She discussed 3 projects she has on-going in the City. She hopes to open a Distillery and Soda Shop in the Birmingham Drug Store building. Mrs. Al-Zubaidy introduced Lisa Lowery, a master distiller, who provided the benefits a distillery can bring to the City. The second project is the Axe to Grind Coffee Shop and Café on Hamlet Avenue, which will be opening soon. The third project is a building she is redeveloping at 3 E Hamlet Avenue for high quality tenants. Mrs. Al-Zubaidy discussed with Council the need to have the City's Ordinance amended to allow for a distillery. Mayor Bayless asked the Manger to contact the City's Attorney for assistance with the request. The Manager advised there is a formal method to make the changes; the presentation today was to get the idea to Council. The property owner advised she hopes to have tenants in the upstairs of the buildings. Currently, the City's Ordinance does not allow for mixed use. Mrs. Al-Zubaidy discussed the Hamlet Business Development Association's new leadership and the development of their strategic plan. She also mentioned that she will need assistance in getting a wayfinding sign once the distillery is open. Council thanked the business owner for her investments in Hamlet.

#### **9. Discussion of State Grant (Downtown and Recreation)**

##### Recreation

The Manager provided Council with estimates for improvements to Memorial Park for a scoreboard, netting, backstop, and lights, totaling \$147,150.66. The City received \$125,000.00 in State Grants for Recreation. The estimates were obtained October 2021; current costs will need to be obtained. Council discussed the many needs at Memorial Park to host a 2023 Tournament. Council Member Covington motioned to initiate the Memorial Park Project. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0. Mr. Christian advised he would bring Budget Amendments back to Council when needed. Council discussed the idea of getting a sponsor for the scoreboard. Council Member Martin shared Chip Gordon's idea of hosting a George Whitfield Invitational Tournament. Coach Whitfield has agreed to come to promote the event. The City Manager asked Council for a verbal budget amendment to add the revenue from the State and add the Capital Expenditures in the Parks Department for the project. Council Member Covington gave the motion. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

##### Downtown

It was consensus of Council to move forward with the Downtown Improvements. The City Manager asked Council for a verbal budget amendment to add the \$125,000.00 revenue from the State in the Streets Department and the expenditure in Street Improvements. Council Member Covington gave the motion. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

**10. Discussion of ARP Projects**

The City Manager reported he had put in a rough estimate of \$20,000.00 for a digital sign; a more realistic cost is \$50,000.00. The location has not been determined. He feels it is best to put this project aside and discuss at a later date. He is moving forward on the technology.

**11. Discussion of Tree Removal**

Mr. Christian discussed a Memo he prepared for the removal of significantly deformed and hazardous trees. He has reached out to the Tree Board to notify them. Phase 1 will be identifying and classifying all the trees subject for removal. Public Works will help with the assessment. Now that the trees have been cut out of the power lines, the City can remove some of them. Following the completion of Phase 1, the City can summarize the needs and project the time and costs for the project. It will take several years to complete. He will report back when he has Phase 1 completed.

**12. City Manager's Report**

The City Manager requested an increase in the weekly on-call rate, The current rate of \$70 per week has not been adjusted since 1999. He proposed \$20.00 a day on Monday through Friday and \$35.00 a day for Saturday and Sunday. He reported employees are also paid for the time they come out. Council discussed giving a minimum of 2 hours for public works employees when they are called out. Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the rates presented and to pay public works on-call employees a minimum of 2 hours when they are called out. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

Council discussed the proper protocol to report a water emergency after hours. The Manager clarified contact should be made with the Hamlet Water Plant. They are staffed 24 hours each day and will contact the person on-call.

**13. Motion to go into Closed Session per NC General Statute §143-318-11(a) (6) Personnel**

At 5:52 pm, Mayor Bayless asked for a motion to go into Closed Session and stated the Statute. Council Member Covington provided the motion and Council Member McQueen offered the second. The vote was 4-0.

**Return to Open Session**

At 6:17 pm Council Members Covington and McQueen motioned to return to Open Session. The vote was 4-0.

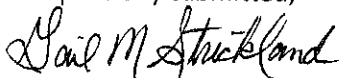
**Open Session Action**

Council Member Covington motioned to reclassify the current position of Administrative Assistant to Executive Assistance and move the salary to Grade 9. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

**14. Motion to Adjourn**

At 6:20 pm, Council Members Covington and Martin provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

