

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM  
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345  
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2022  
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	TC Morphis
City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Police Chief	Dennis Brown

**Others Present:** Denise Cozart, Gavin Stone, Howard Wallace and Jehu T. Barnes

**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 McQueen asked to amend the Agenda to include Item 11 A, Discussion of Inclement Weather Policy. Council Member Martin motioned to adopt the Agenda with the addition. Council Member Sellers provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the February 22, 2022 Meeting were approved by motions of Council Members Covington and Sellers. The vote was 5-0.

**5. Comments from Attendees**

Ms. Denise Cozart with STEM Wellness Empowering Lifelong Learning addressed Council, thanking them for their support of past events, especially the notifications that were placed on the City's water bills. She discussed the upcoming Drone Academy that STEM has partnered with NC State A&T and USDA to provide the Academy in 5 counties for 3 years. Richmond County is included in the 5 counties. Ms. Cozart asked Council to once again add the information on the water bills and place registration forms in areas accessible to the public. The SWELL programs are held at Dobbins Heights Community Center and the Leak Street Alumni Center.

**New Business**

**6. Public Hearing – Zoning Text Amendments – Breweries and Distilleries**

Mayor Bayless opened the floor to the Public Hearing. The City Manager explained breweries and distilleries are powerful tools for economic development. The City's current Ordinance allows for bars and restaurants, but not distilleries or breweries. The amendments presented were reviewed by the Planning Board and approved. The text amendments add the use and definitions of the uses in B-1, B-2, I-1 and I-2 zoning districts and notes to comply with specific standards set by the ABC and Federal Law. Mayor Bayless added a business owner has an interest in opening a distillery in the old Birmingham Drug Store Building. With no further comments or questions, the Mayor closed the Public Hearing.

**1. Consistency Statement & Decision - Zoning Text Amendments – Breweries and Distilleries**

Council Member Sellers motioned the text amendments were consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Council Member McQueen provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

Council Member Covington provided the motion to approve the text amendments. Council Member Sellers offered the second. The vote was 5-0.

**2. Resolution 2022-01 – Surplus**

The City Manager informed Council the Resolution was to provide retiring Major Marc Terry his badge and service weapon. The Mayor inquired if the Surplus Resolution has to be done each time an officer retires. The City Attorney advised the badge and weapon have to be declared surplus each time. Council Member Covington asked if the items are given to retirees or to retirees and officers that leave. Mayor Bayless answered they are given to retirees. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the Resolution. The second was offered by Council Member Covington. The vote was 5-0.

**3. Approval to Advertise Delinquent Taxes**

Mayor Bayless advised Staff is requesting permission to advertise the delinquent taxes on April 16, 2022 with the last date to pay and have your name removed April 4, 2022. Council Member Stuart motioned to approve the advertisement. Council Member Covington offered the second. The vote was 5-0.

**4. Approval of Tax Releases**

Council Member Covington motioned to approve the Tax Releases in the amount of \$571.79. The second was provided by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 5-0.

**5. Consideration of Street Sweeper Bid Award**

Mr. Christian commented his recommendation is the best equipment after evaluating the submitted bids. It has a wide variety of features that were not included on the spec sheet. Mayor Bayless inquired if the street sweeper was a demo. The City Manager confirmed and added the sweeper was recommended by Public Works Director Billy Stubbs. Council Member Stuart inquired if the unit was available; Mr. Christian confirmed. The Mayor stated the request from Staff was to award the bid to Joe Johnson Equipment in the amount of \$239,172.00. Council Member Covington motioned to award the bid. The second was offered by Council Member Stuart. The vote was 5-0.

**11A. Discussion of Adverse Weather Policy**

Council Member McQueen stated he had spoken with the City Manager regarding the Inclement Weather Policy, specifically when the City is closed due to inclement weather and an employee had already scheduled the day off. The current policy requires the employee to take their time off when others are having a day off with pay. Council discussed the topic, but did not come to a consensus on making any changes. Mr. McQueen asked the Manager to work on revising the policy and bring the

matter back to Council. The City Manager stated he will share the current Inclement Weather Policy with Council for review.

**Other Business**

**6. City Manager's Reports**

City Manager Matthew Christian announced baseball sign-ups are on-going at the Water Department and Senior Center. He added Bridges Street is now open to traffic and reminded Council the Budget process is in full swing with the next Budget Work Session scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**7. Comments of Council**

Council Member Sellers thanked Billy Stubbs and Matt Christian for the work on obtaining a street sweeper. He commended the Police Department on the improvement in the number of stray dogs. Chief Brown reported since August of 2021, 190 - 200 animals have been taken to the animal shelter. He also thanked Ms. Cozart for her presentation.

Council Member Stuart called attention to International Women's Day and acknowledged Council Member Covington. He invited citizens to attend the meetings and thanked those in attendance.

Council Member Covington called attention to the progress taking place in Hamlet: Stephanie Al-Zubaidy's business on Hamlet Avenue, the renovations at the Joe's Florist Building that will be a coffee and sandwich shop, and Village Thrift. She has visited the downtown businesses and encouraged the citizens to make visits and patronize the merchants. Mrs. Covington commended Mechelle Preslar for the upcoming events sponsored by the City of Hamlet and read the list of events.

Council Member McQueen asked the Manager for the procedure to rent the gym. He will provide Mr. Christian with the contact information for the person that is interested in the rental. Mr. McQueen inquired on the availability of police badges for officers that retired in the past. The Police Chief responded the Department no longer has them; previous Chiefs disposed of them. The Council Member thanked the merchants that are putting time and money in the downtown redevelopment and encouraged citizens to visit them. He expressed his appreciation to Council Member Covington for her service to the City of Hamlet and recognized her filing for County Commissioner. Mrs. Covington stated that she wanted everyone to know that she is happy to remain serving Hamlet, but sometimes things happen and to continue to serve Hamlet, she has to get out of her comfort zone. She hopes to accomplish her objective.

**8. Mayor's Comments**

Mayor Bayless thanked Council, employees, the HBDA and new business owners. He encouraged the citizens to visit and shop in Hamlet. He stated the distillery will be positive for Hamlet with the amenities at the Depot. He commended Mechelle Preslar on her work at the Depot.

**9. Motion to Adjourn**

At 7:58 pm, Council Members Covington and Sellers provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

*Gail M. Strickland*

Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

