

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2021
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:

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

Staff Present:

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| City Attorney | TC Morphis |
| City Manager | Matthew Christian |
| City Clerk | Gail Strickland |
| Finance Officer | Jill Dickens |
| Public Works Director | Billy Stubbs |
| IT | Zach Garner |

Others Present: Brad Arrowood, Martha Strong, Timothy Hays, Robert Strong, Jimmy Holland, Denise Cozart, Charles Craven, Jr., and Amy Guinn

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 motioned to adopt the Agenda. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 3-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the January 12, 2021 Regular and Closed Session Meetings were approved by motions of Council Members Martin and Stuart. The vote was 3-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

Ms. Denise Cozart with Stem Wellness Empowering Lifelong Learners (SWELL) spoke to the Board introducing the company. She provided the Initiatives of Swell at the Dobbins Heights Community Center as: a Hydroponic Room, eSport League, STEM Programs for Seniors, Educational Programs and Services, assistance with job applications and interviews, and Drone Education for first responders. Ms. Cozart reported SWELL is a non-profit company. Councilman McQueen suggested the City provide

contact information for the company on the utility bills. Mayor Bayless provided Ms. Cozart's contact number to the public.

Mr. Gerard Morrison spoke with Council via phone to provide awareness of Black History Month. He called attention to several successful, local, black citizens and employees of Hamlet and other businesses. He encouraged Council and Hamlet Leadership to attend the John Coltrane Edu-tainment Event in October that focuses on local history and talent. Mr. Morrison suggested Council consider district representation, stating it would be a more effective representation of the citizens.

New Business

6. Public Hearing – Rezoning Hamlet Mobile Home Park, LLC

Mayor Bayless opened the floor to the Public Hearing for the rezoning. Tim Hays, with Impact Communities, spoke to the Board. He advised the company is petitioning to expand the park with 23 new homes and relocate 7. He added, if rezoned, they will install new water and sewer infrastructure and comply with all City Ordinances. After the rezoning process, they will move to the engineering phase of the project. Mayor Bayless asked if the company owns the property and Mr. Hays confirmed. The Mayor inquired if they have a Manager on site and was informed they do. He asked if they had met with City Staff regarding the water and sewer. Mr. Hays responded they have a proposed plan, and if the property is rezoned, they will meet with the City to get the requirements. When asked for the number of mobile homes in the park, Mr. Hays stated there are 80. A map of the proposed mobile home placement was shown to Council. Mr. Hays reported they will install a 6-inch water line in place of the current 2-inch line that will provide a loop and give better water pressure. Council Member Stuart inquired on the affordability of the new homes. Mr. Hays replied they will be \$27,000.00 - \$35,000.00. Council Member McQueen asked if the proposal meets current zoning for lot size and spacing. Gail Strickland responded if the parcel is rezoned, the company will move to the zoning phase and provide a map for consideration. Mr. McQueen questioned the ramifications if the property was rezoned, but the project did not follow through. The City Manager responded, if rezoned, they would have to consider any permitted uses of the rezoned parcel. Mr. Morphis added the rezoning would remain the same; Council could go back and change the zoning following the process. With no further comments or questions, the Public Hearing was closed.

7. Consistency Statement & Decision of Rezoning Hamlet Mobile Home Park, LLC.

Council Member McQueen motioned the rezoning was consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 3-0. Mr. Stuart provided the motion to rezone the parcel. Mr. McQueen offered the second. The vote was 3-0.

8. Consideration of Ordinance 2021-01 Update to Code of Ordinances Sections 5-36 through 5-44

Mayor Bayless explained the current ordinances were the adoption of various portions of the State Building Code. Attorney Morphis stated, years ago, this was very common in local ordinances, but now the State Building Code basically preempts all local construction standards and local governments are no longer required to address building codes. This does not alter Richmond County Building Inspections from providing inspections for the City of Hamlet. Council Member McQueen motioned to adopt the Ordinance. The second was given by Council Member Martin. The vote was 3-0.

9. Consideration of Date for Budget Meeting

In the absence of two of the Council Members, it was decided the Manager would email some possible dates. Mr. Christian advised any weekday selected would need to have a time after 3:30 p.m.

10. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member Stuart motioned to approve the Tax Releases. The second was provided by Council Member McQueen. The vote was 3-0.

11. Approval to Advertise Delinquent Taxes

Mayor Bayless advised Staff is requesting permission to advertise the delinquent taxes. He reported the amount of delinquent taxes is currently \$195,729.06. He reported the City needs the money and asked citizens to pay promptly. Council Member McQueen motioned to approve the advertisement. Council Member Stuart offered the second. The vote was 3-0.

Other Business

12. City Manager's Report

City Manager Matthew Christian provided information on the Hamlet Depot Blood Drive that will be held Feb. 25th from 1 pm – 5:30 pm at the American Legion. He also gave an update on the WWTP expansion project to Council and the public. The City has received comments from the first submission to the USDA. The City will respond and resubmit. Mr. Christian advised Staff has started gathering internal budget information along with departmental information for the 2021-22 budget. A date for the first work session with Council will be scheduled for March. In regards to the Covid vaccine, the Health Dept. has asked the City to inform the public the vaccines are available and citizens should contact the Health Dept. for information and scheduling. He reported the emergency responders were in the first group to be vaccinated and a large group of Hamlet employees have been given access to the vaccines. The City Manager stated other City employees will be in group 3. He is waiting for a response from the Health Department to get more information.

13. Comments of Council

Council Member Stuart thanked the City employees for their continued work during Covid. He personally acknowledged Black History Month and thanked his ancestors, stating that he has opportunities because of them. Mr. Stuart recognized and thanked Mrs. Ruth Watkins, who recently passed. He said she was influential in hundreds, if not thousands, of students attending college and advised he had been able to participate in work at the JC and Ruth Watkins Cultural Center in past years. In regards to Covid, he asked everyone to continue safe practices and to get the word out about the vaccines. He advised that we need to help anyone that needs assistance in getting the vaccinations.

Council Member McQueen called attention to Black History Month and the accomplishments mentioned earlier. Referring to the budget cuts the City had to make when the County changed the sales tax, Mr. McQueen stated the City had to put contributions to agencies on hold. He discussed the value of Richmond County Crime Stoppers and asked anyone in the public that would like to make a contribution to reach out to Jeff Avant. He added he hoped the City would be able to contribute to them again. He thanked the City Manager and City Attorney for working with Rockingham to make corrections to the wrongs that have been done by the County. Mr. McQueen said he appreciates that Rockingham and Hamlet are working together.

14. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless asked everyone to get the vaccinations. He also stated he appreciates the City of Rockingham working with Hamlet to resolve the sales tax issue.

15. 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 7:48 pm, Council Member McQueen offered the motion. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 3-0.

At 8:19 pm. Council Members McQueen and Stuart motioned to return to Open Session. The vote was 3-0.

16. Motion to Adjourn

At 8:20 pm, Council Members Stuart and Martin provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

