

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2018
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro-Tem	Johnathan Buie via phone
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Wendy Massagee
Council Member	David Lindsey

Staff Present:

City Manager	Jonathan Blanton
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
City Attorney	TC Morphis
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
IT	Zach Garner
Public Works Director	Billy Stubbs
Police	Robbie Carlisle

Others Present: Linda Bayless, Jehu Barnes, Amy Guinn with the Richmond Observer, Jasmine Hagins with the RC Daily Journal, Don Norton, Kay Cavendish, Tim Nevinger, Bernice Owens and Chuck Cobb

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order.

2. Invocation

Reverend Dr. Tommy LeGrand of Prayer and Faith Temple offered the Prayer.

3. Adoption of Agenda

City Manager Jonathan Blanton asked Council to amend Item #9 on the Agenda to include a request from RitzCraft for the Depot Rotunda Rental. Council Member Martin motioned to adopt the Agenda with the addition. The second was provided by Council Member Lindsey. The vote was 5-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the September 11, 2018 Regular Monthly Meeting and Closed Session Minutes and September 15, 2018 Emergency Meeting were approved by motions of Council Members Buie and McQueen. The motion carried 5-0. Mayor Bayless explained the emergency meeting was held with the Fire Chief and Police Chief to get an update on Hurricane Florence preparedness.

5. Comments from Attendees

Chuck Cobb, President of the Seaboard Festival, updated Council on the upcoming event. He announced all spaces are full and provided upcoming meeting dates prior to the festival, inviting everyone to attend and participate in the final plans. Mr. Cobb showed 2 banners purchased by the RC Tourism Authority that can be displayed around the County to advertise the Festival. He also informed Council Diane Mabe, a member of the Board, suggested the Festival purchase a 2-sided banner that would stretch across the

street, possibly near Arlo's Service Station. A drawing of the proposed banner was presented and an estimated cost of \$754.00 provided. Council Member Buie made a motion for the City to purchase the banner. Council Member McQueen stated the City would need an actual cost. Mr. Buie amended the motion for the City to purchase the banner at a cost up to \$1,000.00. Council Member Lindsey advised Duke Energy has restrictions on the use of their poles and permission will need to be obtained prior to the festival. Mr. Buie motioned to give the City Manager authority to proceed with the purchase up to \$1,000.00 if Duke Energy gives permission to use the poles. Mr. Lindsey provided the second and the vote was 5-0. Council Member Lindsey suggested the large banner should be stored in a controlled environment to extend its usage.

Mr. Jehu Barnes spoke to Council regarding several issues. He asked why Council's names are not on the Agenda. Council Members explained they each have a name plate at their seat and the information is available on the website. Mr. Barnes reported beautification in his neighborhood has been lax over the last few years. He does not think that he should have to continuously call to report overgrowth on the City's property and street signs. Mr. Barnes stated he was without power 4-5 days during the recent storm. He called the Hamlet Police Department and spoke to Officer Sears. He stated Ms. Sears was unprofessional giving sarcastic remarks. Their phone conversation ended and Mr. Barnes feels she hung up on him. He called back and spoke with Officer Jacobs but he could not provide the needed information and told him no one would come out until after the storm passed. Mr. Barnes did not think this was correct. Council Member Lindsey advised the Duke Power employees were ordered to come in and stated the City has nothing to do with the power. The Mayor inquired which property was creating the issue. Billy Stubbs stated it was the old pumping station but it has been cut several times this summer. Mr. Barnes replied that he has called several times regarding flooding issues and is yet to see someone. Council Member Buie stated he sees police officers in the area when he officiates games at the ballfield. Mr. Barnes explained the officers patrol the low-income housing but not the other homes in the neighborhood. Council Member McQueen offered the explanation that new officers may not realize the extent of the City limits on Gin Mill Rd. but that can easily be corrected. Mr. Barnes suggested speed bumps to slow traffic and Mr. McQueen explained our insurance is not in favor of them due to damage to vehicles. Then suggested by Mr. Barnes was a sign for children at play. The City Manager advised he has checked on the area and he will speak with the Police Chief regarding the employees and the officers patrolling the neighborhood.

Old Business

6. Discussion of Improvements to Jack Breeden Park

The City Manager reported the paving of the basketball court concluded last Friday and the fencing material should be installed in the next 2 weeks. Last month Council directed him to obtain pricing for additional items. He reported an 18' x 21' shelter is \$2500.00, and 4 new basketball goals, benches and tables \$1,000.00 - \$2,000.00. Mr. Blanton stated his meeting with Duke Energy has been postponed until Thursday. Mr. Buie expressed the need for the lighting with the recent break ins. Mr. Lindsey inquired if the cost included concrete to which the City Manager responded the concrete would be extra. Council Member Lindsey suggested the concrete would be beneficial for appearance and security. Mayor Bayless asked for the amount of money budgeted for the project and the Manager reported \$60,000.00. Billy Stubbs provided an estimate of \$1500.00 - \$2000.00 for the concrete. Mr. Lindsey suggested the City have an electrician pull electricity from the building and mount LED lights on the building at a much cheaper cost than lights from Duke Energy. He suggested the Manager obtain prices and bring back to Council next month. Council Member Martin stated Council knows what the prices are and they should move forward with the project. Council consulted with Mr. Morphis if consensus was enough for the Manager to proceed with the improvements. The Attorney advised consensus was sufficient since the money was previously approved. Council Member Lindsey asked the Manager to read a list of the items to be purchased. Mr. Blanton stated he will move forward with the shelter for a cost of \$2,500.00, 4 goals for

\$6,000.00, benches and tables up to \$1,000.00 and the concrete slab for \$1,500.00 - \$2,000.00. He will meet with Duke Energy to obtain prices for the lighting and update Council on his findings. Mr. Lindsey inquired if benches would be placed on the basketball court and Council Member Martin suggested at least 2. Council Member Lindsey suggested purchasing metal tables with a vinyl covering. Council Member Buie suggested getting a price from the Grainger Representative for the tables. The Mayor decided a motion was the best way to proceed with the project. Council Member Martin provided the motion and Council Member Buie gave the second. The vote was 5-0. Mr. Lindsey advised the City may want to get prices from an electrician to install the lighting at the concession stand.

The phone connection with Council Member Buie was lost. Mr. Blanton attempted to call him but his phone went to voice mail.

New Business

7. Update to Fee Schedule.

The City Manager explained the fee schedule has 2 suggested changes. The Subdivision Ordinance was updated by Council in 2016. The Current Ordinance requires the Planning Board to hold a Public Hearing for the review, approval or denial of the preliminary plat for major subdivisions. To offset the costs incurred, Staff consulted with Mr. Morphis and recommends a \$300.00 fee. Second, in regard to the increase in water rates and tampering fees, Staff is suggesting Contractor Temporary Water Hydrant Hook-ups up to 2,000 gallons per load increase from \$25.00 to \$100.00 and Fire Hydrant Tampering Fees increase from \$50.00 to \$150.00, the same as other tampering fees. Council Member Lindsey questioned the \$400.00 fee shown on the print out and Gail Strickland advised it was a mistake, the suggested fee is \$300.00. Council Member McQueen asked the Manager to explain tampering fees. He stated when water is cut off by the City for non-pay and then found to be turned on by a customer, a lock is placed on the meter. The fees increase as the number of tamperings increases. Council Member McQueen motioned to approve the proposed fee schedule and Council Member Lindsey provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

8. Discussion of Ordinance for Chickens.

The Mayor stated the City has received inquiries on allowing chickens and Council asked Staff to research the issue. Mr. Blanton replied Staff has looked at Ordinances in various municipalities and found the Ordinances vary greatly. Based on the findings, Council will need to decide if they want to allow chickens and if so other factors such as only allowing chickens, permits, zoning, and allowing in certain areas. He asked Council for guidance. Council Member McQueen acknowledged a lot of cities allow a limited number with very strict regulations and asked for towns that allow. Mr. Blanton provided the names of Vass, Cleveland, Cary, and Sanford. Mr. Bayless stated the Ordinance should be simple and the City's Attorney may have written Ordinances for the towns mentioned. Mr. Morphis stated he worked on the Ordinance for Aberdeen and the Town of Whispering Pines who decided they did not want chickens. He advised Council first needs to decide if they want to allow the chickens, and then the details such as restrictions for lot size, construction standards and if roosters will be banned. Council Member Martin asked if a Public Hearing is required. The Attorney answered this can be handled as Police Power or Zoning Authority but suggested Council allow people an opportunity to speak at a Public Hearing and treat as a Zoning Ordinance. The City Manager stated the first step is to send the matter to the Planning Board. He asked Council to review the Town of Vass Ordinance to provide guidance to the Planning Board. The Ordinance was shown on the overview projector. Mr. Blanton read Vass' Ordinance allows chickens but no roosters, requires coups be located in the rear yard, allows 1 chicken per 5,000 ft., states chickens must be kept in the coup at night, no slaughter is allowed, no zoning compliance is required and has setbacks for the coups. He said he did not see a maximum number of chickens in the Ordinance and offered his suggestion of 2 for maximum. Council Member Lindsey suggested 4 for the maximum. The Attorney added not requiring a permit up front would be helpful and strongly recommended including no

slaughter to the Ordinance. It was consensus of Council to have the Planning Board develop a recommendation for Council to consider at which time a Public Hearing will be held.

9. Consideration of Rotunda Rental Use with Alcohol.

The Mayor stated Council has to make the determination for the use of alcohol for Rotunda Rentals. He advised Council has 2 applications to consider. Mr. Jeff Tippett has rented the Rotunda for October. Council Member Martin asked the purpose of the rental and Mr. Blanton advised it is for a wedding reception. The Mayor stated the City has no way to oversee the events; he does not want to have damage at the building. Mr. Martin replied the tenants have insurance. Council Member Lindsey stated he had an issue the application was not received in the required timeframe. Council Member Massagee stated Council may need to revisit the policy for applications that do not fall in the time period. Mr. Lindsey replied the time frame is needed for Council to address. The City Manager stated Council had previously discussed control of last-minute applications that did not meet the 45-day time period. At that time the Mayor did not want the responsibility of making the decision.

Council Member Buie joined the meeting via phone.

Council Member Martin stated Council had 2 issues and made a motion to approve both provided they had the necessary insurance. Mr. Lindsey asked to vote on the applications separately saying he was opposed to the one that did not meet the deadline. The Manager asked Mr. Martin if he wanted to amend his motion. He did not. Council Member Buie provided the second saying if they became a problem, they would be asked to leave. Police Officer Robbie Carlisle suggested they could require the renter to have security. Mr. Martin stated the Police could patrol the area. Council Member McQueen asked if they were required to have State Permits for serving alcohol and the Mayor stated they were. The vote was 4-1 with Council Member Lindsey in opposition. The Manager stated he could bring the matter back to Council next month. Mayor Bayless commented he felt Council should make the decision. Council Member Martin suggested the Manager have the authority to make the decision. Council Member Buie agreed. Council Member McQueen asked Mr. Morphis if the City Manager could approve the applications. He responded the matter comes to Council because that is the policy Council adopted. He suggested if Council gives the authority to the Manager, they should give a set of rules and policy for him to follow and mentioned some towns require security if alcohol is served. The Mayor asked the Manager to put the discussion on the Agenda for next month.

10. Discussion of Letter of Support for Samaritan Colony.

Mayor Bayless stated Mr. Harold Pearson, Director of Samaritan Colony, has requested a letter of support from Council for a 14-bed residential treatment center for women to be built at the same location. Council Member Martin inquired if they were requesting a donation. The Mayor replied they were not. Council Member Martin made the motion to provide the Letter of Support and Council Member McQueen gave the second. The vote was 5-0.

11. Discussion of Non-household Debris Removal

The Mayor reported he has discussed with the City Manager and Public Works Director the amount of debris the City has to carry to and pay for at the land field. Mr. Stubbs reported the City has to pay for disposing of building materials and the amount has increased significantly over the past 6 months. Council Member McQueen asked Mr. Stubbs to explain the difference between County debris and building materials. He stated most County debris is furniture. Residents that have building material can rent a trailer from the City but the amount they pay does not cover the entire costs. Mr. McQueen stated it is a cost for the City to remove the items but if they do not the appearance becomes a problem. He has always felt the City should pick it up because he does not want to see trash beside the street. Council Member Lindsey stated the City did have a policy where people pay for the removal. Council Member

Buie said we either pick it up now or later. Mr. Stubbs stated when the ticket program was in place, people started hauling off the items themselves. Now the City carries several loads to the landfill each week. Mr. Buie asked if it would be better if the City had a certain day to pick up County debris and the Mayor responded we have that now. Mr. Stubbs said the City does not have the employees or the equipment. The biggest problem is landlords that empty an entire house and place the contents at the road for the City to remove. Mr. Buie stated he did not want the average citizen to pay for rental properties. Council Member McQueen suggested the matter be discussed at the mid-year planning session.

12. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Members Lindsey and Martin motioned to approve the tax releases. The vote was 5-0.

13. Proclamation for Veterans Day

Mayor Bayless read the proclamation honoring all veterans.

Other Business

14. City Manager's Report.

The Manager reported Mr. Cobb obtained the total cost of \$720.56 for the Seaboard Festival Banner. Also reported was the demolition on McDonald Avenue concluded this week. He announced the Christmas parade will be December 6th and applications are available as well as tickets for the Ghost Tour on October 19th and 20th and City Offices will be closed November 12th for Veterans Day. Mr. Blanton stated he had corresponded with County Manager Bryan Land regarding spraying for mosquitoes. The spraying is scheduled to begin Friday and last for 4 days. Council Member Lindsey mentioned there may be a problem with bees. Council Member Buie stated 4 confirmed cases of West Nile Virus have been reported in Florence.

15. Comments of Council.

Council Member Lindsey mentioned the difference in the amount of water the City processes and bills and stated we do not have meters on City properties. He suggested employees put meters in during down time. Council Member Martin replied there is no need to meter; the City knows water is used in the various departments. The Mayor asked if there are Federal or State requirements to meter all buildings. Council Member Buie said the only reason to meter is to find out if we have leaks. Mr. Blanton asked Billy Stubbs if the meter installation could take place in house and Mr. Stubbs confirmed it could. Council Member McQueen asked if the fire hydrants could be metered and Mr. Stubbs replied they could not. Council Member Martin said installing meters would be too expensive. Mr. McQueen stated it is not worthwhile if you cannot meter everything. Mr. Lindsey replied he thinks the City should try to install the meters to find leaks.

Mr. Lindsey referred to an article in the Richmond Observer on the Opera House raising money for renovations. He was not aware Council had discussed this. The Mayor stated it was an independent group. Council Member Lindsey said previously when the Seaboard Festival wanted to give money to the City for the Opera House it created an accounting nightmare. He said he is in favor of the Opera House but the funds raised by the group will not help. They cannot raise what is needed.

Council Member McQueen explained he went to the HBDA meeting where the group expressed interest in the Opera House. He said between 2005 – 2009, Council agreed to have an Opera House Committee and pledged \$50,000.00 to the project. The money was not budgeted but pledged. He suggested they form a Board and said that he was impressed with the passion this group has and the out-of-the-box ideas they suggested. He would like, at some point, maybe at the mid-year budget to try to get the committee set up, not to pledge money but to back the group the right way.

Council Member Lindsey said he is not against the idea but the City asked the Seaboard Festival to not give small amounts of money for the project. He is concerned that Council has not addressed the issue and the group is raising money for a City owned building. Mr. Lindsey said when he was first on Council he asked Council for 6 months to obtain grant funds for the project but was unable to locate any.

Mrs. Bernie Owens of the HBDA Board spoke to Council. She mentioned the money raised for the Depot Project and said the same could happen for the Opera House. She requested a \$1,000.00 donation from each Council member. Council Member Buie stated the City either needs to move forward with the restoration or tear the building down before it deteriorates and creates a problem for the adjoining buildings. Council Member McQueen asked Mr. Morphis if a private group can raise funds if the City does not receive them. The Attorney answered the group can solicit donations but it is better for the group to hold the funds until the City commits to it. Council Member Lindsey responded he did not want people deceived by thinking the City has committed to the project. He does not think the City can afford it.

Council Member Martin stated the Depot received a major grant from the NCDOT with the assistance of Mr. G. R. Kindley for the project. He said the City needs a grant, more than \$1,000,000.00. Mrs. Owens replied Senator Tom McInnis will help.

Mr. Lindsey discussed the Manager's weekly update a few weeks ago where the Manager said the City of Rockingham will allow the City to use their stage for the Seaboard Festival and the City's insurance would cover it. Council Member Lindsey said he was told previously and had emails stating the City's insurance would not cover the stage. Mr. Blanton said his discussion with Mrs. Lindsey was that the City's insurance would not cover the Festival. Mr. Lindsey replied the Seaboard Festival previously had to purchase a rider for the stage coverage. He stated in the past he was told you have to be the 100% sponsor to get the coverage. He thinks it is great Rockingham is allowing the use of the stage but wants the Manager to investigate to make sure it is covered. He will provide the emails. Mr. Lindsey said if the Seaboard Festival has to pay a rider, it is in their best interest.

Council Member Buie apologized that he could not attend the meeting and reported he was travelling with work. He thanked Chuck Cobb and Mr. Barnes for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation to the City of Rockingham for the use of their stage. Mr. Buie encouraged the citizens to be careful during Halloween.

Council Member McQueen asked the Manager to speak with First Health to inquire if they have plans with the hospital building. The hospital was one of the largest tax and water customers for the City and now that revenue is lost. The Mayor reported Richmond Community College is using part of the facility for the nursing program. Council gave consensus for the Mr. Blanton to reach out to the hospital. Mr. McQueen thanked everyone in the City for all the hard work during the last hurricane, noting the employees worked together, efficiently and effectively. He noted they responded in dangerous situations. Hamlet's employees were out working when others were not.

Council Member Buie reported he was out with the Fire Department and Police Department and was participating with the tree removal. He also stated the City Manager was out with the Fire Department. He witnessed a tremendous effort from all departments. Also noted was a call for assistance came from the City of Laurinburg and the Fire Department went immediately to help with search and rescue. Mr. Buie said Hamlet was fortunate they were not impacted the same as other surrounding communities.

16. Mayor's Comments.

Mayor Bayless reported the fair is in town which means rain. He praised the employees and Manager for their efforts during the storm. Also reported was October 27th is the Seaboard Festival. Mr. Bayless mentioned the unexpected death of employee Brother Jacobs and offered condolences to the family.

17. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS§ 143-318.11 (a) (5) (6) for contract discussion and a personnel matter.

At 8:58 pm Council Member Buie motioned to go into closed sessions per NCGS § 143-318.11 (a) (5) (6) for client-attorney privilege and a personnel matter and asked for a Moment of Silence in memory of Brother Jacobs. Council Member McQueen offered the second. The motion carried with a vote of 5-0.

A Moment of Silence was observed.

At 9:54 pm Council Members McQueen and Lindsey motioned to return to Open Session. The vote was 5-0. The Mayor reported no action was taken in Closed Session.

18. Motion to Adjourn.

At approximately 9:56 pm, Council Members McQueen and Martin motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland,
City Clerk

