

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
CITY MANAGER POSITION
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2019, 9:00 AM
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – OPEN SESSION**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Mayor Pro-Tem	Johnathan Buie (via phone)
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Maurice Stuart

Staff Present:

City Clerk	Gail Strickland
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Others Present:

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Bayless called the Meeting to Order at 9:00 am.

2. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS § 143-318.11 (a) (6) to discuss personnel matter.

At 9:00 am, Council Members Buie and Martin provided the motion and second to go into Closed Session. The vote was 4-0.

3. Motion to go Return to Open Session.

At 9:08 am, Council Member McQueen motioned to return to Open Session and Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

Mayor Bayless reported Council had reviewed a contract and needed to vote on the rehiring of Mr. Jonathan Blanton as City Manager. He asked for comments from Council for the record.

Comments of Council

Council Member Martin stated, having served for 2 terms on Council, he has realized the importance of a City Manager and the value of a City Manager. In reading the contract, he thinks it is appropriate and he is in favor of asking Mr. Jonathan Blanton if he would accept the terms of the contract with a salary of \$90,000.00 annually and with no break in service if he is reinstated as the full time City Manager. He feels the salary is in line with other towns and necessary to keep a good City Manager. Mr. Martin said after advertising, the City received applications and interviewed several, but they did not have experience as a Manager. He feels the reason the City did not receive applications from experienced Managers was because the salary was too low.

Council Member McQueen agreed the applications received did not have experience. He said Mr. Blanton has handled many things well and he is glad to have him back.

Council Member Stuart said he appreciates Council stepping up to make sure we are equal in compensation to other towns and cities in pay for City Managers, setting things up to keep someone here.

Council Member Buie concurred with the other Board Members. He made the motion to offer Mr. Jonathan Blanton a salary of \$90,000.00 annually with a contract provided by the City's Attorney and to include continuous employment in regards to his benefits since he has served as Interim. Council Member Martin provided the second and the vote was 4-0.

Mayor Bayless stated Council had looked at offering a contract previously and now they were at a point that a contract must be offered to keep a good, quality Manager. He stated the contract will work best for the City. It is a 3-year contract and will allow the Manager to have goals and objectives for long-term.

Council Member Martin advised Mr. Blanton was in his office and asked if Mr. Blanton could join the meeting for Council to make the offer.

At 9:14 am Council Member Buie left the meeting.

At 9:15 am, Mr. Blanton joined Council. The Mayor asked if Mr. Blanton would accept the contract as is and he accepted. Mr. Bayless added that Council had agreed his employment would be continuous. Mr. Blanton asked if it was a 3-year contract and Mayor Bayless confirmed. Mr. Blanton stated he had one request if the City Attorney was in agreement. He asked that any discussions that were had in Closed Session regarding his position as City Manager be made available to the public. Mr. Blanton said it was his understanding of the law that Closed Session Minutes can be made public with the approval of Council as long as it does not frustrate the purpose of the Closed Session Meeting. He said if he was the subject of the Closed Session, he would have no issue with them being made public for transparency; there would be no question as to what was discussed. Council agreed. Mr. Blanton asked for the minutes to reflect several things since Mrs. Massagee was not in attendance; he did not want any ambiguity, questions or cloud over what was said. First, he stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of a contract, there was no deal beforehand, no offer accepted beforehand and today was the first time this was officially discussed and the first time he has officially accepted the deal. There were no behind the scenes collusion or coordination where he agreed that he would come back before today.

Mayor Bayless explained Council Member Martin had brought the matter to Council's attention and requested they have a meeting. He added, prior to this, there were no meetings among Council Members. If there was anything, it was individually and there were no emails back and forth. He also advised Council Member Massagee could not attend due to the cancellation of her daughter's high school graduation which was rescheduled for Saturday morning. The Mayor added there was nothing that is not open to the Public.

Mr. Blanton clarified it is not unethical or illegal for the City Manager to speak one-on-one with Council Members informally and it is not illegal or unethical for Council Members to have informal one-on-one conversations with each other. Mayor Bayless stated the Manager was not the one that requested the contract; it was Council. The City Manager thanked Council for the show of support in him and said he was honored by the confidence they have in him. The

Manager said he has enjoyed the past 2 years here and looking forward to great things for the City of Hamlet. He appreciates Council's offer and gladly and whole-heartily accepts it.

Council Member Stuart asked the date Mr. Blanton would return as full-time Manager and he responded he has not spoken with the University but he has a target date of July 1st to return full time. He will remain as interim until then.

The Mayor announced the pay package, when compared with surrounding cities, puts the City of Hamlet in the middle or slightly above the middle.

Mr. McQueen stated, through this process, after Mr. Blanton announced his resignation, they had several applicants to apply and interviewed the top 3. During the process, Council had the opportunity to come together on more than 3 or 4 different times to meet to interview people. He said the Mayor did everything he could to co-ordinate with everybody in the process and he personally wanted to thank Council Members Martin, Stuart, Buie, Mayor Bayless and himself for securing a day and time to work with. Council Member McQueen said with the dates and times Council had and the fact they could not have unanimous attendance on the Council is a shame. He added the Council and Mayor that participated in this process gave it everything they had. Mr. McQueen thanked Mr. Blanton for accepting the offer. He said the City would have important decisions to make in the next few years regarding infrastructure and other things. Mr. McQueen thanked Mr. Blanton for returning to the City of Hamlet and noted his return solidifies the fact that he loves the town.

Council Member Martin said he wanted the Manager to know Council has discussed and recognizes the value and importance of the City having a good City Manager and thanked him for accepting the offer.

Mr. Blanton had one final note. In regards to Mrs. Massagee's email yesterday concerning the origin of the contract, he wants the record to clearly state, after the possibility of a contract was mentioned to him, he reached out to the Town of Wadesboro and obtained a copy of their Manager's contract. He then tweaked it with the provisions of the ICM Model City Manager's Contract. He sent a draft to the City's Attorney last Sunday where he said that Council may be interested in bringing him back to the City of Hamlet with an employment agreement. He added if the Mayor is so agreeable, please review the contract and attached it to the email to Mr. Morphis. Mr. Blanton stated he knew there were questions regarding the origin of the contract and he did submit it to the Attorney, asking him to review it and copied the Mayor on the email so as to not be instructing the City's Attorney on his own bequest. He said Mrs. Massagee had concerns of the origin of the contract and restated he sent the Model Contract coupled with Wadesboro's Town Manager's contract to the City Attorney. Mr. Blanton said Mr. Morphis stated in his email he did not change the substance of it as so to indicate it came from him. Mr. Blanton said it may not have been clear of where it came from but the contract came from him and he wanted to clear any ambiguity or question Mrs. Massagee may have.

Mayor Bayless stated he empathized with Mrs. Massagee today. She had a situation she could not control; she had to be at her daughter's graduation.

1. Motion to Adjourn.

At 9:25 am, Council Member McQueen motioned to adjourn the meeting. The second was provided by Council Member Stuart with a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland
City Clerk

