

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2019
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Bill Bayless
Council Member	Johnathan Buie
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Jesse McQueen
Council Member	Maurice L. Stuart, II

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	Grantland Jackson and Charles Talley

Others Present:

Linda Bayless, Mayor Antonio Blue, Carrie Aquino, Pastor Chris Hawks, Tim Nevinger, Kay Cavendish, Gerald Pakota, II, Don Norton, Amy Guinn, Mike Willman, Jo Ann Martin Willman, Jordyn Willman, Lewis Fulmer, Melanie Richardson, Alex Faye Smith with the Daily Journal, Pamela Nelson, Kelly Bryant, Audrey Stuart, Ellerbe Councilman Jeremy McKenzie and others that did not sign in.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

2. Invocation

Pastor Chris Hawks of Second Baptist Church offered the Prayer.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Council Member Buie motioned to adopt the Agenda with the addition of Item 11a – Mayor Pro Tem and Lumber River COG Representative Change, Item 11b- Resignation of and Presentation to Council Member Johnathan Buie and Item 11c – Council Member Replacement. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the May 14, 2019 Regular Meeting, Closed Session and Special Meeting and the May 30, 2019 Special Meeting and Closed Session Minutes were approved by motions of Council Members Buie and Martin. The vote was 4-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

Mayor Antonio Blue from Hoffman addressed Council in regards to tapping fees for sewer connection for Bishop Wooten who spoke with Council last month. Mayor Blue explained the Town of Dobbins Heights received a \$1.2 million grant and they paid \$500.00 per house to connect. He understands the fee is now \$1000.00 and he does not think it is fair for Bishop Wooten to have to pay the increased price. Mayor Bayless stated the residents of Dobbins Heights are charged the same price as a resident of Hamlet. Mr. Blue stated the original sewer lines were ran through Dobbins Heights to carry sewer to Plastek but he did not know who paid for the project. He asked Council to allow Mr. Wooten to pay the rate others paid previously saying it was not mandated for residents to tie on when the lines were placed. Now when they have sewer issues, they need to tie in. Council Member Buie stated if we do for one, we have to do for all and gave an example of someone that wanted to get irrigation would be required to pay the tap fee. Mayor Blue asked if there are citizens in Hamlet paying for sewer that are not receiving the services and it was confirmed. Mayor Bayless stated they chose not to hook up and would pay the increased rate if they chose to tie in now. Mr. Bayless asked when the rate increased. Mr. Blanton responded July 1, 2018 and advised if customers chose to tap on later, they pay the current rate because the cost originally incurred has not been recouped. Council Member McQueen asked Attorney Morphis if there was a difference in the sewer taps for Hamlet and Dobbins Heights. Mr. Morphis answered the concern is that we do not have good documentation. Mayor Blue provided Council and the Manager with paperwork that showed the Town of Dobbins Heights paid \$5000.00 for 10 houses. Mr. Blanton asked for clarification, why if the Town of Dobbins Heights paid the \$5000.00 previously for 10 houses there was an issue now. Mayor Blue replied he did not say Mr. Wooten should not pay, he thought he should pay the original amount of \$500.00. Bishop Wooten, from his seat, remarked that he should not have to pay at all.

Bishop Wooten addressed Council saying when he came before he was told if they brought documents showing the Town of Dobbins Heights paid, he would not have to pay. Mr. Buie answered the paperwork show others paid \$500.00. Mr. Wooten said they did not know they should not have paid.

Council Member McQueen suggested the Manager, Mayor and Mayor Blue get the documentation and bring it back. He said it could be a situation different than in the City of Hamlet. Mayor Blue asked the City Manager to call him to schedule a meeting.

Old Business

6. Truck and Trailer Parking

Mayor Bayless reported the Attorney has worked on this and asked for comments. Mr. Blanton explained the issue originated 4 months ago when the City realized our Ordinance was vague when considering if parking at home is a final destination. The Manager said the Attorney had drafted an Ordinance and he deferred comments to him. Mr. Morphis stated he did not have any comments unless there were questions. Council Member Buie said he checked with the Attorney to make sure Council could provide a time frame for residents to be in compliance with the Ordinance if it was adopted. The Mayor asked if any attendees wanted to make comments. When he realized they had not seen the Ordinance, the Manager provided it on the screen for the audience and the Attorney reviewed the changes. The draft clarifies the definition of a commercial vehicle, it takes the existing Ordinances that already prohibit parking on public streets except for business related purposes and clarifies the definition of a commercial vehicle. The more significant change, if adopted, will amend the Zoning Ordinance as well which will prohibit the parking of commercial vehicles on residential lots with some exceptions. Exceptions would be for loading or unloading, and temporary use if it does not meet the definition of commercial vehicle.

Mr. Michael Willman, a truck driver that resides in the City limits, spoke with Council. He said his tractor trailer weighs 35,000 pounds empty and loaded with sand 26 tons of sand weighs approximately 80,000 pounds. Mr. Willman said he can park at the Shell Station in Hamlet. He stated all this started with complaints the trucks were damaging the streets. Mr. Wellman added there are other Ordinances in Hamlet violated that are not being addressed. The Manager explained we have a Code Enforcement Department and we receive numerous complaints that are addressed. The City operates on a complaint basis and only when an issue is brought to our attention can it be resolved. Mr. Willman answered he knows of 3 people that have not received the letters. Mr. Blanton said the City needs the names and if the Ordinance is passed, they will be notified. Mr. Willman asked for the timeline. Mr. Morphis explained part of the Ordinance is in the Zoning Ordinance and will need to go to the Planning Board before Council approval. It was determined the Planning Board would review in July and it would come back to Council in August which will allow the drivers time to make arrangements.

Ms. Callie Bryant addressed Council. She does not understand why the Ordinance was written the way it was. She said some companies requires the truck to be under supervision. Her son would have to drive 3-1/2 hours one way and it is convenient that he can stay at her house for several days. Ms. Bryant stated Council does not understand since they do not drive a truck. Council Member Buie explained other larger towns prohibit commercial parking and Ms. Bryant answered this is Hamlet and this is the first time of complaints. She said the trucks are not on the street. Mayor Bayless answered the City streets are not built to NCDOT standards for commercial trucks. Mrs. Bryant replied she could understand if the trucks were driving on the streets every day, but her son comes every few months.

Mr. Lewis Fulmer spoke with Council. He said he cut down trees in his yard and had to cut them to a certain size. He said his truck, when he comes home once every 60 days, weighs 32,000 pounds empty. He has lived there since 2008. Mr. Fulmer said the trucks do not tear the roads up and a fully loaded City truck weighs as much as his truck. He continued by saying according to Federal regulations, unless he crosses a low tonnage bridge, he can go home. Mr. Fulmer said he cannot afford to drive to Oklahoma and fly home so now he has to find somewhere to go because truck driving is how he makes his living. When he is at home, he has to have the truck in his sight or he will be fired. He has walked the street and does not see any damage. He doesn't want to hire a lawyer but he will if he has to. Mr. Fulmer feels the neighbor that moved in next to him made the complaints and the neighbor is a renter.

Ms. Bryant asked to speak with Council again and asked, if the Ordinance was about the ambiguity of the law, why not rewrite it to include if you are going to your house. The Attorney responded he received direction from Council to prohibit the parking of commercial vehicles on residential property. She asked if a neighbor has a truck that has been parked for 5 years will they have to move it and the Manager responded the owner would have to follow the Ordinance also.

Mrs. Joann Martin Willman stated she mentioned at the first meeting that property was being damaged and 4 wheelers were riding on the streets. She said 2 weeks ago cars were being broken into and they saw 17-18- year olds walking at 2:30 am. She tried to call the Hamlet Police Department and could not reach them. The Mayor explained all calls now go to 911. Mrs. Martin thought calls to 911 were for emergency only and the Mayor explained the number is for all police calls. He also said it is practically impossible to catch 4 wheelers but the Police Department does have leads on the break-ins. Council Member Buie stated the damage to properties he had discussed was not caused by 4

wheelers. He added one neighbor had to put stakes in their yard to keep trucks from causing damage. He also noted several areas in the City where commercial trucks are parked on the side of the road.

New Business

7. Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget Ordinance.

Mayor Bayless opened the floor to the Public Hearing. The Manager reported the Ordinance is prepared in accordance with the NC General Statutes and lays out the money that has been allocated in the Manager and Staff recommended Budget Message in May. He advised the Ordinance has no major changes other than the totals. No one approached to discuss the Budget. The Public Hearing was closed.

8. Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget Ordinance.

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

9. Approval of Tax Releases.

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

10. Budget Amendments – 4th Quarter FY2018-19.

City Manager Jonathan Blanton stated the amendments were cleaning up the Budget for the end of the year. Council Member Buie motioned to approve the Amendments. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

11. Resolution 2019-06 LRCOG Letter of Support.

Mayor Bayless announced The LRCOG Board of Directors requested the Resolution of Support for Members to adopt and submit to their North Carolina General Assembly Representatives. The Mayor read the Resolution. Council Member Buie motioned to adopt the Resolution. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

11a. Mayor Pro Tem & LRCOG Representative Changes

Mayor Bayless announced Council will have a change in the Mayor Pro Tem. Mr. Buie said he will be stepping down due to a job relocation, but Council had business they needed to take care of before he left. He stated he was stepping down as Mayor Pro Tem and nominated Council Member McQueen as his replacement. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 4-0. Mr. Buie advised he has served as Council's Representative to the Lumber River Council of Government and nominated Council Member Stuart to take his role on the Board. Mayor Bayless stated Mr. Stuart was currently serving as the alternate. Council Member Martin gave the second and the vote was 4-0.

11b. Resignation and Presentation for Mayor Pro Tem Buie

Mayor Bayless announced Mr. Buie will be resigning from Council due to work relocation. Council Member Buie said he has spoken with Board members and the Manager and he wants to leave the City in someone's hands that will do it justice and not someone that is in it for political reasons or friendships. He suggested Council replace his seat with Joe Robinson, but said it will be up to the Board.

Mayor Bayless read a Resolution and a plaque honoring Council Member Buie and presented them to him.

Mr. Buie stated the job as a Council Member has been a roller coaster, sometimes fun, sometimes stressful and sometimes frustrating. He has lived in Hamlet all his life and will depart soon. Mr. Buie commented on his road to serving on City Council. He said it will be hard leaving friends and family. Mr. Buie said that Council is a business; it has been hard but it has been an experience he will never forget. He hopes when he retires to return but until then he wants to be involved in community. He encouraged others to be involved to make a difference. He thanked everyone that put him where he is. Mr. Buie thanked the Board and Staff. He said he did not need his name on anything but knew that he has made a difference in the City of Hamlet and commented on the placement of the rock at Hamlet Middle School.

Council Member Buie stepped down and Council Member McQueen took the seat next to the Mayor.

Council Member Martin motioned to accept the Resignation of Mr. Buie. A second was offered by Council Member McQueen. The vote was 3-0.

11c. Council Replacement

Mayor Bayless opened discussion for replacement of Mr. Buie's vacancy. Council Member Martin said he agrees with Mr. Buie; he knows he wants the best for Hamlet and realized he would not recommend just anyone to take his place. Mr. Martin stated Mr. Buie called and asked if he knew Mr. Robinson and he said he did. He remarked Mr. Robinson just retired from the Postal Service and previously mentioned he would have interest in serving on Council. Council Member Martin stated Mr. Robinson is the Chaplain of the Marine Corps League of which he is a member. He added he lives in Hamlet, is married, has children and grandchildren, earned a degree from RCC and has other involvement with hospitals and procurement of materials and other things. Mr. Martin described Mr. Robinson as very level headed, has a good reputation in the community and very well liked. He thinks Mr. Robinson would make a good Councilman.

Council Member McQueen agreed with Mr. Martin. He does not know Mr. Robinson personally, but he has never known him to have any political issues or agendas. Mr. McQueen reported when Council meets in July, it will be time to file to run for office and there has been talk of persons that are interested in an appointment. He would not want to give someone an unfair advantage at that point. He said he thought Mr. Robinson would be a good choice.

Council Member Stuart stated he values Mr. Buie's opinion, but he could not support the appointment, not seeing anything about Mr. Robinson on paper or knowing who he is. He felt Council should give others an opportunity to apply.

Mr. Martin said it would not be fair to wait 5 months to fill the seat. If Council waits until next month, it will be in the middle of the campaign and would be unfair to take someone out of the group that is campaigning to place on Council. Mr. Martin motioned to appoint Joe Robinson to fill Johnathan Buie's vacancy immediately, contingent on his acceptance. Mr. McQueen provided the second. The vote was 2-1 with Mr. Stuart voting in opposition.

Council Member Martin expressed his appreciation to Mr. Buie and hates to see him go. He said Council will move forward. He asked for confirmation on the vote for Mr. Robinson and the Mayor answered the vote was 2-1.

Mr. Stuart thanked Staff for helping when he calls and at the meetings. He thanked Mr. Buie for his assistance, noting he was helpful as he came on the Board. He also thanked the citizens for coming to the meetings. Council Member Stuart encouraged them to bring their concerns that are voiced on the streets to the meetings. He thanked the Mayor and Council for everything.

Mr. McQueen thanked Mr. Buie for his service and noted he had never served with anyone as passionate. He wished him well.

Mayor Bayless offered his thanks to Mr. Buie and said he would be missed. The Mayor asked to go on the record that he did not have a vote and the replacement was sudden. He added he did not have a problem with Mr. Robinson but with respect to his fellow Councilmen, he would not have gone in that direction. He also announced there is a new display at the Tornado Building and invited everyone to make a visit to see it. Mr. Bayless reported Chief Calvin White and the City of Hamlet were honored with Patriot Awards from Employer Support Guard & Reserve. He read the City's Award. Mr. Bayless also read a proclamation honoring Mrs. Mildred Teal Jones on her 100th birthday and presented the Proclamation to her granddaughter, Melonie Richardson.

Other Business

12. City Manager's Report.

Mr. Blanton congratulated Ms. Richardson on her grandmother's 100th birthday. He welcomed Council Member Jeremy McKenzie from the Town of Ellerbe. The Manager announced the July 4th activities in Hamlet will start at 2 pm with food, music and a large fireworks' show. The City's garbage schedule will be altered for July 4th; Thursday's pick-up will be Friday. Mr. Blanton thanked Mr. Buie for his many years of service and wished him well. He stated he was honored, privileged and humbled by the faith that Council expressed in him over the weekend when they offered him a chance to return as City Manager. He has accepted the offer and effective July 1st, he will be back full-time. Mr. Blanton said there have been difficult times, heart-warming times and many valuable relationships that he has made with this Council and previous Council. He continued by saying that everyone had welcomed him and there was no place he would rather be returning than Hamlet. The Manager thanked his wife for her support in his return. He provided the information for soccer registration.

13. Comments of Council.

Comments were given prior to the City Manager's report.

14. Mayor's Comments

The Mayor said Council, over the past years, has worked hard and managed to work things out. He stated the budget is in excellent shape and thanked Staff for their work on it. Mr. Bayless said he has enjoyed working with Johnathan Blanton. He is very responsive to citizens and always has an open door. The Mayor also commented Council has an excellent working relationship with Mr. Morphis. The Mayor reported the City continues to work on water and sewer issues. He offered his appreciation to City Council and said he hates it when they lose a member mid-term but they will work through it.

15. Motion to Adjourn.

At 8:40 pm, Council Members Stuart and McQueen provided the motion and second to adjourn. The vote was 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

