

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORK SESSION
HAMLET LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM
302 W. MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2020
9:00 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 Manager	Jonathan Blanton
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Finance Officer	Jill Dickens
Public Works Director	Billy Stubbs

Others Present: Gavin Stone

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Council Member Covington motioned to adopt the Agenda. Council Member Martin provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

3. Discussion of 2020-2021 Fiscal Year Capital Outlay Requests

City Manager Jonathan Blanton gave an overview of the Budget and purpose of the meeting. He advised he had provided Council with a rough draft of the Budget and explained it will change based on the capital outlay items discussed today. He will send a more formal draft for their review once compiled. In regards to the list of Capital Outlay projects, items over \$5,000.00, he advised some are essential but some can be delayed.

Public Works

- Limb Truck: \$40,500
- Street Sweeper: \$185,415

Councilman Martin inquired if a new one was needed. Mr. Blanton reported the current sweeper has been repaired numerous times the past few years. Billy Stubbs advised the last purchase of a new sweeper was in 1993. Ten years ago, Amick Equipment refurbished the sweeper. Mr. Stubbs reported the purchase price increases each year; it has increased \$7,000.00 since 2019. The City Manager suggested the City finance the purchase, not buy outright, to help with this budget and the Fund Balance Appropriation. Councilman McQueen asked if the City could contract out the work. Mr. Stubbs replied contractors do not have the heavy-duty equipment needed to do the work.

- Cemetery Lawn Mower: \$11,250

Water Plant

- Clarifier: \$45,000
- Clear-Well: \$26,000

The City Manager reported the items at the Water Plant are essential. Council Member Covington asked for clarification that the money for the clarifier was for restoration, not replacement. Mr. Blanton confirmed.

WWTP

- Grit-Hopper \$82,500
- Lawn Mower \$8,557.88
- Upgrade Planning: \$150,000

Mr. Blanton advised he tentatively put in \$150,000.00. It is very speculative; Council has to award the contract first.

Waste Collections

- Reline Charlotte St.: \$54,500

The City Manager stated this is a necessary repair.

Building Maintenance

- Depot Roof Repairs: \$26,000

The City Manager advised the roof is a necessary repair. Doc Sylvain has secured quotes of \$25,000.00 - \$30,000.00.

Fire Department

- 2020 Ford F250: \$44,000

Council discussed EMS sold vehicles and equipment recently. They did not see the vehicle purchase as a need at this point. A truck was purchased for the Fire Chief recently.

- Air-Packs (2): \$26,000

Council stated the air packs are a necessity and increased the number to purchase to 4.

Parks and Recreation

- Registration Fees

Mr. Blanton stated Parks and Recreation Director Maurice McLaurin had not asked for anything except to decrease the fees for baseball and football to increase participation. Council discussed the revenues and expenses. It was determined if the fees were reduced and participation increased, the revenues could remain the same. The City Manager will update the fee schedule for Council's review and adoption. Councilman McQueen asked the Manager to provide the numbers for declines in sports' participation.

Councilman Stuart suggested adding monies for gym repairs. Mr. Blanton reported they have budgeted an extra \$5,000.00 for needed repairs to the ceiling.

- City Lake Renovations

Mr. Blanton advised a Master Plan is in place and a community meeting was held for citizens' input. He asked for Council's wishes to move forward with budgeting. He suggested putting

\$100,000.00 in the budget, contingent on grant funding. Council could re-evaluate mid-year to see the prospect of grants. If grants are not secured, the budgeted money could be utilized for smaller projects. Council expressed the need to continue with the beautification of the lake area.

Mural of John Coltrane

- The City Manager reported he was contacted by a North Carolina Artist Group that had received a Cultural Grant to go around to NC cities and towns and paint murals of famous musicians. They have selected 10 sites and would like to do a mural of John Coltrane in Hamlet. The fee for the mural is \$12,000.00, but they have secured a sponsor for up to \$6,000.00. The proposed location of the mural is behind the Opera House, on the Raleigh St. side. The artists have received permission from the Coltrane family; they need approval from the City and have asked for the City to commit up to \$6,000.00 for the project. Council discussed the need for a mural on the side of Birmingham Drug's building. Mr. Blanton advised the artists met with the Depot Board and gave them information on a mural also. He feels the Depot Board is interested in a mural, but will need to get approval from the owners of the building. Council gave consensus to move forward with the mural of John Coltrane. The City Manager added the life span of the art is 10 years.

Senior Center

- Additional Personnel
The City Manager advised he told the Director he did not recommend additional personnel, but he would convey the request to Council. Mayor Bayless explained the Center has 3 part-time people now. Council Member Covington added the Center has numerous volunteers.
- Van
Council did not see the need for the purchase at this time.

Human Resources

- Employee Raise
Mr. Blanton reported the City has had a good year and is in excellent financial shape. He recommended a 3% raise for all employees, adding the raise last year was 2%, but the prior year the employees did not receive an increase. Council Member Covington asked if the 3% increase would level the playing field with surrounding municipalities' pay. Mr. Blanton responded by saying the City would still be slightly behind; he was not sure if other towns were providing pay increases this year. Council Member McQueen responded the Police Department is close to other law enforcement agencies and Hamlet is no longer the training ground. Council Member Stuart inquired on the dollar amount for the increase. The City Manager replied approximately \$100,000.00. The increase in employee insurance for the next fiscal year is 6%. Council Member Sellers asked if Council should consider a 6% raise to bring the salaries in line with other cities. Mrs. Covington asked if there were sustainable revenues to cover the increases. Mr. Blanton advised the sales tax fluctuates, but property taxes remain the same; the enterprise fund is in good shape now since the rates were increased. Councilman McQueen asked for the projected fund balance appropriation. The City Manager stated currently it is \$900,000.00, but they will make significant cuts before the final amount is set. In the past it has been \$500,000.00 - \$600,000.00, but the money has not been taken out of the Fund Balance. Mr. McQueen added money has been added to the Fund Balance each

year. Council discussed different raise percentages and Christmas bonuses. Council Member Covington motioned to give a 4% pay increase to all employees, a \$200.00 Christmas Bonus to full-time employees and a \$100.00 Christmas bonus to part-time employees. Council Member Martin gave the second. The vote was 5-0.

Contributions to outside agencies

The City Manager advised each year the City makes contributions to the following outside agencies:

- Crime Stoppers - \$1500
- Richmond County Literacy Council - \$1000
- Depot Board - \$2000
- Woman's Club - \$500
- Backpack Pals - \$1000
- National Railroad Museum - \$1000
- Soup Kitchen - \$1000
- MLK - \$100

Council gave consensus to continue with the contributions at this time, but they may consider an application process in the future.

4. Discussion of Utility Fees During COVID-19 Pandemic

- Public Buildings Closed

Mr. Blanton reported public buildings are closed to the public, only open to employees. The Mayor stated everything in Parks and Recreation is closed except the City Lake Trail. It was consensus of Council to continue to operate as normal with all City buildings closed to the public. The City Manager reported no one has been laid off. Some of the part-time people are not working due to the amount budgeted for part-time personnel.

- Utility Fees

Council discussed late fees and water cut offs during the next few months. Council Member Martin motioned to waive late fees and to not cut off water access for April, May, and June. Council Member McQueen offered the second. The vote was 5-0.

- Garbage Collection

Public Works Director Billy Stubbs expressed concern for the safety of his employees while collecting garbage. He asked for Council's permission to have letters printed and distributed to citizens requiring all garbage to be placed in garbage bags and then in the trash cans. It was consensus of Council to allow the letters.

5. Discussion of City Manager Position

- Advertising for City Manager

The City Manager distributed a draft job description for the City Manager position. He reported his last day will be April 17th. He will take vacation the week of April 13th, but will attend the April 14th Council Meeting. His last physical day in the office will be April 8th. Council gave consensus to move forward with advertising for the Manager's position. Council began the discussion of an Interim, but when names were given, it was determined the discussion should be in Closed Session.

- April 14th Council Meeting

- Mayor Bayless reported the Budget Message needs to be presented at the April 14th meeting to meet the 30-day requirement before adoption. It was consensus of Council to have the meeting, call it to order, present the budget message, postpone the scheduled public hearing for the alleyway closing and close the meeting.
- Electronic Water Meters
Mayor Bayless stated he would like to see the City go to electronic water meters. The City Manager stated the initial start-up cost would be approximately \$300,000.00; the project could be included in the USDA grant request.

6. Closed Session to Discuss Awarding Engineering Firm for WWTP Renovation Contract and Personnel Matter per NCGS§ 143-318.11 (a)(5)(6).

At 10:34 am, Councilman Martin motioned to go into Closed Session and stated the Statutes. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

Council recessed from 10:35 – 10:45.

At 11:05 am. Council returned to Open Session.

Award of WWTP Engineering Contract

Council Member Martin motioned, based on the City Manager's recommendation, to award the contract for the WWTP to LKC Engineering. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The vote was 5-0.

7. Motion to Adjourn.

At 11:10 am, Council Members Sellers and Covington provided the motion and second to adjourn. The vote was 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

