

**HAMLET CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS ROOM
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2020
7:00 PM
MINUTES**

**Due to Governor Cooper's Order in regards to the Coronavirus, the meeting was limited to 10 people.
Additional seating was provided in the foyer for the media and attendees.**

Governing Body Present:

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

Staff Present:

City Manager	Matthew Christian
City Clerk	Gail Strickland
Finance Director	Jill Dickens
IT	Zach Garner
Public Works	Billy Stubbs

Others Present: Adam Kiker and Rob McIntyre with LKC Engineering, LLC and Gavin Stone

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bayless called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. He announced Council Member Sellers was absent due to surgery and was home doing well.

2. Moment of Silence

A Moment of Silence was observed.

3. Adoption of Agenda

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

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the July 14, 2020 Regular Meeting were approved by motions of Council Members Covington and McQueen. The vote was 4-0.

5. Comments from Attendees

No one presented to address Council and no one had requested to call in to the meeting via phone.

New Business

6. Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements RFQ Award

City Manager Matt Christian explained he has picked up the project from his predecessor. The RFQs were previously received and reviewed by Council. He explained the Board needs to vote to approve the RFQ from LKC Engineering, LLC. Council Member McQueen motioned to approve the RFQ and Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

7. Presentation by LKC Engineering, PLLC

City Manager Matt Christian invited Adam Kiker and Rob McIntyre with LKC Engineering to speak with Council. Mr. Kiker provided information on his company and its resources. He advised they have met with Staff and learned about the current system. Currently, the WWTP is permitted to treat 1 million gallons each day. From the data he has received, the average for Hamlet is 843,000 gallons daily. He explained the State has strict guidelines for treatment plants when they reach an average of 80% and 90% capacity. At 80%, they expect you to be in the planning and design stage and at 90% in construction to issue additional sewer permits. Mr. Kiker commented that he has spoken with the State and they will be involved to provide the best plans for Hamlet. His company will spend time with staff and operators and genuinely listen to their concerns, likes and dislikes. He thanked the Board for their confidence in LKC. Mayor Bayless inquired if the WWTP was currently under a moratorium from the State and the Manager answered he thought so.

8. Approval of Tax Releases

Council Member Stuart provided the motion to approve the tax releases. Council Member Covington offered the second. The vote was 4-0.

9. Approval of Annual Tax Settlement

Mayor Bayless requested a motion to approve the Tax Settlement. Council Member Covington commented the collection rate has dropped nearly 2.5%; it was 96.69% in 2018 and 94.3% in 2019. She motioned to approve the Settlement. Council Member Stuart offered the second. The vote was 4-0.

10. Mayoral Appointment to the Hamlet Housing Authority Board

Upon recommendation from the Hamlet Housing Authority Director, Mrs. Sheri Parks, Mayor Bayless re-appointed Ms. Dianne Smith to the Board.

11. Appointment to Hamlet Police Department Citizens Review Board

Mayor Bayless stated the Police Chief has asked Council to consider Reverend Allison Farrah. Council Member Martin provided the motion to appoint Mrs. Farrah to the Board. Council Member Covington offered the second. The vote was 4-0.

12. Presentation by Hamlet Depot Museum Manager

Museum Manager Mechelle Preslar introduced herself to Council and gave information on current and future plans for the Depot Complex. She advised Jeanne and Steve Newton donated train themed masks they are selling for \$10.00. Also, available to purchase are commemorative bricks for \$90.00 and Depot Memberships for \$20.00. More than 80 memberships have been sold and more than 20 bricks at this time. They are working to give the web page a work over, the giftshop a facelift and hope to have a virtual tour of the complex very soon. Another endeavor they are planning for is a train mural, possibly of the Orange Blossom Special. Mechelle reported on a recent blood drive hosted by the Depot; 25 pints were collected and 75 lives saved. In an attempt to stay relevant, they have a social media team and are on Instagram and Twitter. She expressed appreciation to the Depot Board and volunteers. In closing, she

distributed masks and Membership Packets to Council and Staff. She advised persons wishing to purchase can contact her at the Depot and she will bring the items out to them.

13. Approval of Hamlet EMS Contract

Matt Christian reviewed the EMS Contract that has been in place for 4 years and is now up for renewal. Previous renewals have been for 2-year terms. This contract is now for 1 year with minor modifications in regards to payments. The City pays for EMS employees, fuel and other things up front and EMS reimburses the City for 50% annually. He met with Fire Chief Calvin White and EMS Director Richard Lassiter and determined it is in everyone's best interest to have more payments that will be smaller with an adjusted timeline. He advised the 1-year contract gives an opportunity to make needed changes with careful, deliberate conversations. Mayor Bayless inquired if the only changes were the payments will now be received twice a year and 1 month earlier. The Manager confirmed. Council Member Martin inquired if the contract was the Manager's recommendation. When the Manager advised it was, Mr. Martin provided the motion to approve the contract. Council Member Stuart offered the second. The vote was 4-0.

Other Business

14. City Manager's Report

City Manager Matt Christian reported the decal has been installed on the recently painted caboose with funding from the Cole Foundation and the Community Foundation of Richmond County. He thanked them for their support. He advised City Buildings remained closed, but Staff is available by phone or email to the public. The City has experienced some COVID scares and has now implemented a policy, internally, to set guidelines for social distancing, mask wearing and temperature checks. Mr. Christian announced the City will be submitting a COVID plan to Richmond County to request a portion of the funding the County has received. He has been in contact with administrative officials at the County to get their expectations. The plan is due September 1st and he will have the eligible expenditures to them prior. He commented 25% of the funding received by the County has to be distribute to the municipalities.

The Manager reported the Executive Order from Governor Cooper, suspending late fees and cut offs for water accounts, expired on July 29th. It has been critical in helping residents maintain their services. During the time of March 21st – July 29th, the City has lost \$62,675.00 in revenue. With the expiration of the Executive Order, the City will be proactively reaching out to the water customers, to get them on a payment plan that can be up to 6 months. For bills accrued during that time, customers can put them on a payment plan, but following the expiration of the Executive Order, he advised the City will resume the normal collection practices.

Council Member Covington inquired on the amount of COVID Funds the County received. Mr. Christian reported the County received approximately \$1.8 million and the cities will split approximately \$425,000.00. Mrs. Covington commented the County will have \$1.4 million to keep and should be in excellent financial shape. Council Member McQueen asked how the money would be distributed to the cities. The Manager answered he had spoken with both the County Finance Officer and County Manager last week and they have not made a decision; they are waiting until they receive the cities' plans. He advised the City of Hamlet's request will be substantial, more than the County has to distribute. Mr. McQueen asked when the City's plan would be submitted and the Manager replied he and staff are working now to get supply expenses as well as payroll. Council Member Covington reported the Town of Ellerbe will apply to sustain their current contract with the Sheriff's Department for law enforcement. She asked if the money is for reimbursement of what has been spent or what we are likely to spend. Mr.

Christian replied it can be both. His understanding is what the CARES Act covers for public safety is very broad. Mrs. Covington added it was first reported the distribution would be based on ad valorem tax value, but she does not know if that is the situation now. Council Member McQueen said using the money to sustain something that was already in existence was not what it was designed for. Referring to the money the City lost in water revenue, he said that was a loss due to COVID. He said the money should not be used for things already in place. The Manager explained, in the law that gave the monies to the states and then to the counties, the one thing that is prohibited is revenue loss coverage. The intent is to cover expenses that we have incurred and expenses we will incur in the future. He hopes to have the plan together and submit it next week. He will keep Council apprised of the details.

Also announced was the closing of City Buildings on Monday, September 7th for Labor Day.

15. Comments of Council

Council Member Covington, speaking in regards to the Manager's first month, said he is making an effort to involve himself and she is impressed that he does not make hasty decisions. She stated she is glad Council Member Sellers is doing well and she is anxious to talk with the Attorney during Closed Session on mediation with the County.

Council Member Stuart thanked the City employees for their continued dedication to work during the COVID issue. He also reported he has received tremendous, positive comments on the garbage and leaf and limb pick up.

Council Member McQueen reported he had a citizen reach out to him regarding tractor trailers braking on Hwy. 177 near Convenience Corner. He asked the Manager to have the Police Department investigate and see what can be done. Council Member Martin advised the City has signs in place that need to be enforced. Mr. McQueen offered congratulations to Hamlet native Jamie Graham who recently won the World Champion Cornhole Tournament. Mr. McQueen thanked the City employees, saying things are going well and stated Matt Christian is doing a great job. He wished Councilman Sellers a speedy recovery.

16. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Bayless offered wishes for a speedy recovery for Council Member Sellers. He thanked the Manager for his work and asked Public Works Director Billy Stubbs to let the employees know they are doing a great job. The Mayor thanked the citizens for their understanding of the way things are, currently. He announced there will not be an Agriculture Fair this year due to safety concerns with COVID. Council Member Covington inquired on the Seaboard Festival. Council Member McQueen reported they are meeting Thursday. Mayor Bayless asked everyone to go by the Depot and get a mask and to call City Hall if they need anything. In closing, he thanked Council for their work.

17. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS§ 143-318.11 (a) (3) for attorney-client privilege.

Mayor Bayless called for a motion to go into Closed Session and stated the Statute. At 7:39 pm, Council Member McQueen motioned to go into Closed Session. Council Member Covington provided the second. The vote was 4-0.

At 7:58 pm, Council Members Covington and Martin provided the motion and second to return to Open Session. The vote was 4-0.

18. Motion to Adjourn.

At 7:59 pm, Council Members McQueen and Stuart provided the motion and second to adjourn the meeting. The vote was 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Gail M. Strickland, City Clerk

